UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

EXEMPLARY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

BY

AARON DOUGLAS TRIMBLE ©

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IN

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **"Exemplary Junior High School Teachers,"** submitted by **Aaron Douglas Trimble** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **MASTER OF EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP.**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine what makes some junior high school teachers exemplary. A qualitative study was undertaken. Semi-structured interviews with five exemplary junior high school teachers were used to determine the essence of exemplary teaching.

By doing both an inductive and deductive analysis, the framework as well as the rich description of exemplary junior high school teachers was realized.

The study reveals that the five exemplary junior high school teachers share similar qualities and characteristics. Common themes found were the possession of basic professional knowledge, certain personae, specific character qualities, certain philosophies, as well as "adultolescence" and "insightiousness."

Furthermore, the exemplary junior high school teachers believed every child is worthy of quality educational experiences and all students can learn and grow to meet their full potential. It is the combination of these many variables that define what makes some junior high school teachers exemplary.

A DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all teachers who are committed to the education of children and providing them with the best educational experience possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to share this thesis with a number of people.

I am indebted to the five exemplary junior high school teachers who participated in this study. It was their knowledge and experiences that made this research possible. I am very grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

Exemplary Junior High School Teachers

Introduction

"Teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to build bridges of their own." - Unknown

On June 23, 1997, my last day of teaching, I sat looking out of the window of my soon to be old classroom, and I thought how crazy I was to leave a job I loved so much. For five years I taught junior high school in a small town, and that day I was leaving it all behind to go back to university to pursue a master's degree in Education.

I loved teaching junior high school students because they are such different individuals. Because of this I believe it takes very special people to teach such individuals. Upon reflecting about all of this, I wanted to know what it is that makes great junior high school teachers so great. Therefore, the critical question and the purpose of this study was to find out what makes some junior high school teachers exemplary. I believe that this study will help benefit those teachers who are having problems teaching junior high school students and will provide reinforcement for

those who are presently doing an excellent job in the classroom. The overall benefit will be to those junior high school students who are in the junior high school teachers' classrooms.

Identification of the Problem

The junior high school teacher is responsible for the success of the program offered and the welfare of his or her students in the classroom. Many junior high school teachers are capable of effective teaching. There are a limited number of teachers, however, who are exemplary in their practice. The question this study addressed is: What makes some junior high school teachers exemplary?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are provided to clarify their use throughout the study. These terms were further refined after the data had been analyzed. The terms are (a) junior high school student and (b) exemplary teacher.

For the purpose of this study, a junior high school student refers to an adolescent in grades seven, eight, or nine. The teachers interviewed were teachers who teach one or more of those identified grades.

An exemplary teacher is one who demonstrates excellence in professional knowledge (e.g., subject matter, curricular, and pedagogical knowledge), interpersonal knowledge (e.g., relationships with students,

educational community, and local community), and intrapersonal knowledge (e.g., reflection, ethics, and disposition) (Collinson, 1996).

Sub-Statements of the Problem

The following sub-questions, like my research question, applied to the study of exemplary junior high school teachers. The sub-questions were:

1. What is an "exemplary junior high school teacher?"

2. What are the perceived unique characteristics of junior high school students?

3. Do exemplary junior high school teachers possess the triad of knowledge?

4. How do exemplary junior high school teachers perceive the importance of the three components of the triad of knowledge?

5. What else do exemplary junior high school teachers possess which are beyond Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge?

It is the answers to these questions which formed my semi-structured interview (see Appendix A). The questions I asked directed the participants' attentions to the themes addressed in the sub-questions.

Beliefs and Biases

It is necessary to reveal my beliefs about exemplary junior high school teachers. As a result of being aware of my beliefs, I attempted to not let them distort my analysis of the data.

My first belief was that "effective" and "exemplary" are not synonymous terms. Effective teachers produce only satisfactory results. Exemplary teachers, however, produce excellent results which places them above and beyond "effective."

Second, my belief was that exemplary junior high school teachers love and care for their students. I believe that a loving and caring classroom atmosphere is highly conducive to intellectual and personal student growth. Therefore, I believe that the intrapersonal knowledge aspect of the triad of knowledge is the most important of the three.

My third belief was that exemplary junior high school teachers treat their students with respect and dignity. I believe this because unless a teacher treats one's students with respect and dignity, the students will not respect the teacher in return. Therefore, the students will not provide the teacher with their greatest efforts.

My fourth belief was that exemplary junior high school teachers are very positive toward their students. I believe that a positive classroom is highly conducive to learning, mutual respect, and cohesiveness.

Having identified my beliefs, I will describe in the methods section the techniques that were used to overcome, as much as possible, the effects of these biases.

Contributions to Theory and Practice

The theory I explored in further detail was Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge. The specific constructs identified in this theory are professional, interpersonal, and intrapersonal knowledge. I believe that, although excellence in all three constructs is necessary in order to be an exemplary teacher, possessing intrapersonal knowledge is the most vital of the three. Professional and interpersonal knowledge, I believe, both rely on intrapersonal knowledge because both require constant reflection for development and improvement to occur. I also believe a model of an exemplary junior high school teacher must be constructed to incorporate additional characteristics which will emerge from the data that are not found in Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge.

The contribution to practice will be two-fold. For the learning contribution, teaching colleges or universities can adopt the results from the study into their programs and teach them to their students so they can

become more effective teachers. As well, in-services could be given in the schools to help teachers become more effective. The managerial contribution will provide employers with characteristics to expect when hiring teachers and evaluating those presently teaching. Also, the results of the study could provide employers with the means to help struggling teachers become more effective.

Organization of the Thesis

In Chapter One the purpose of the research is introduced. The problem is stated and the relevant terms are defined. Beliefs and biases are identified and contributions to theory and practice are highlighted. The second chapter reviews the literature with emphasis on the junior high school students and Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge for the exemplary teacher. Chapter Three is a description of the method of the study. This section recounts how participants were selected and describes the pilot study. In addition, the manner in which data were gathered and analyzed is presented. A section about the trustworthiness of the data is included as well as acknowledgments of delimitations and limitations of the study. The fourth chapter presents the findings and results from a deductive and an inductive analysis. Chapter Five includes conclusions of the study, recommendations for practice and theory, and personal reflections with regard to the research.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

There is a wealth of knowledge on what it is to be an effective teacher. Crossman (1996) lists many authors and their criteria for effective teaching in her thesis *Exemplary Teachers Mainstreaming Students.* Bedwell, Hunt, Touzel, Taylor, and Wiseman (1984) also list many criteria for being an effective teacher in their book *Effective Teaching: Preparation and Implementation.* The terms effective and exemplary are not interchangeable. To be an exemplary teacher one must be an effective teacher but I believe the inverse is not true. "Exemplary" is above and beyond being "effective." There was a great deal of literature that focused on exemplary teaching in general. Authors such as Brown, Emmer, Fraser, Hawryluk, Ornstein, Tobin, and Yager addressed exemplary teaching, but not specifically " exemplary junior high school teachers." Literature that focused exclusively on "exemplary junior high school teachers" was non-existent. This review examines the literature on exemplary teachers using Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge. The triad of knowledge integrated by exemplary teachers includes professional knowledge, interpersonal knowledge, and intrapersonal knowledge.

The focus of this study was on exemplary teachers who teach junior high students. Therefore, the literature also addresses the unique aspects of junior high schools focusing specifically on the students, school structure, school climate, and the focus of the junior high school.

Exemplary Teaching: The Triad of Knowledge

An exemplary teacher is one whose teaching is worthy of modeling. If the exemplary teacher is worthy of modeling, he or she must possess many strong qualities. Throughout the literature, I found a model called the "triad of knowledge" which lists the qualities of an exemplary teacher (Collinson, 1996). This model, for an exemplary teacher, emphasizes continuous development of the triad of knowledge. Collinson's (1996) model contains the following three areas:

1. Professional knowledge (subject matter, curricular, and pedagogical knowledge);
2. Interpersonal knowledge (relationships with students, educational community, and local community);
3. Intrapersonal knowledge (reflection, ethics, and dispositions).

Collinson (1996) believes that to be an exemplary teacher one must integrate the three previously listed forms of knowledge. Her description of each of the three aspects of the triad of knowledge and specific details of what each includes follows.

Professional knowledge. The first aspect of the Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge is what she categorizes "professional knowledge." Professional knowledge includes the following facets: (1) possesses in-depth knowledge of subject matter and curriculum; (2) possesses strong classroom management techniques; (3) inspires learning, manages energy and stimulates interest while teaching subject matter; and (4) uses strategies at assisting students to learn with understanding and gets students involved in classroom discussion and activities.

According to Collinson (1996),

> There is nothing magical about this form of knowledge; it has long been the mainstay of teachers' colleges and is a necessary foundation for good teaching. It is the technical "how to" version of knowledge. In our postmodern world of uncertainty and rapid change, professional knowledge must be continuously updated. (p.2)

A study conducted by Fraser and Tobin (1989) reinforces the importance of professional knowledge. "The research highlighted numerous times the importance of the teacher's content knowledge. In most of the lessons which were observed exemplary teachers displayed strong knowledge of their content area, and this enhanced their teaching" (p.5).

Pedagogical knowledge is vast and important for the exemplary teacher. This encompasses areas such as knowledge of classroom

management which Fenwick (1996) defines as "managing the space by organizing the objects, coordinating people's movements, caring, connecting, and evoking curriculum" (p. 16). Fenwick (1996) states "teachers determine the rules and routines, which in the classroom of an exemplary teacher, function almost invisibly to display teacher expectations for behavior, and to control student movement and distribution of materials" (p. 17).

Pedagogical knowledge also involves knowing how to inspire learning, manage energy, and stimulate interest while teaching the subject matter. Fenwick (1996) believes an exemplary teacher must know how to generate energy by using "strategies designed to stimulate interest like changes in routine, provocative questions or objects, creating suspense, directions to move, switching to new activity, and arouse student emotion" (p.26). Fraser and Tobin (1989) wrote that "most exemplary teachers used strategies at assisting students to learning with understanding and to get students involved in classroom discussions and activities"(p.6).

Steer (1984) also addresses professional knowledge,

> An exemplary teacher should be competent in the following areas: organizes curriculum plans and opportunities appropriate to the junior high school; uses appropriate procedures of managing an instructional program-designing, conducting, and revising curriculum and instruction; demonstrates knowledge of subject matter; uses a variety of instructional strategies; uses some structuring of instruction; and uses concrete materials and focuses learning strategies. (p.9)

Many researchers have contributed findings which supports Collinson's (1996) first aspect of the triad of knowledge. Possessing professional knowledge, as many researchers agree, is definitely necessary for a teacher to be exemplary. But professional knowledge is only a part of the entire package, so other factors must be integrated in order to cover the entire triad of knowledge. The next area which the literature suggests is important for being an exemplary teacher is that of interpersonal knowledge.

Interpersonal knowledge. Interpersonal knowledge is the second of the three facets in Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge. Interpersonal knowledge, or "people skills," encompass the following: (1) fosters students intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth; (2) has successful relationships with students and local community; (3) attends to individual student's needs; (4) involves parents in student learning; (5) works cooperatively with colleagues; and (6)is involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

Interpersonal knowledge is an important focus for teachers too as they are always interacting with students, "The important things that happen in schools result from the interaction of personalities. Teaching,

perhaps maybe more than any other profession, depends on individual and group interactions with many children and adults" (Collinson, 1996, p. 3).

Steer (1984) addresses interpersonal knowledge and the many facets of interpersonal knowledge one should consider in teaching,

> Exemplary teachers possess the following characteristics: interact constructively with other adults and with adolescents; shows regard for persons; is approachable, responsive, and supportive; promote positive relationships between the school and the community, between the teacher and the parents and between various sub-cultures of the school; and have skills of working in cooperative teaching situations--with other teachers, paraprofessionals, and resource persons. (p.5)

Teachers are trained to work with children, which is very important, but little or no time is spent training teachers how to deal with persons outside the educational community. As Collinson (1996) states "Teachers are trained extensively in how to communicate with children. They receive little or no training and in-service development in how to communicate openly, honestly, and accessibly with parents" (p.4). Collinson (1996) feels that "Exemplary teachers have developed high levels of interpersonal knowledge necessary for working well with other adults (e.g., open-mindedness, empathy, and honest communication)" (p.6). The Alberta Teaching Excellence Award also stresses this in their criteria: "Involves parents in students' learning; works cooperatively with colleagues; is involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities; attends to individual student's needs."

Exemplary teachers realize that they are a part of a whole, therefore they must put in effort outside of their classrooms to make a larger impact on their students,

> Exemplary teachers: work as a team toward common goals; are constantly seeking linkages with others in the total school; seek linkages with other teachers in the state and in the nation; reach into the community for information, expertise, ideas, and materials; and work easily with community leaders, administrators, and parents. (Yager & Bonnstetter, 1990, p.4)

Collinson (1996) supports this view.

> Teachers work within political systems and they see teachers as one part of a profession that includes many members--administrators, researchers, teacher educators, state department personnel, union leaders--each with different roles and concerns. Teachers who develop their interpersonal knowledge learn to think in an ever expanding scope of professional community. To do so requires personal and organizational knowledge that allows teachers to understand many different perspectives and facets of issues. (p.4)

Thus, to be exemplary, a teacher must be able to communicate effectively, openly, and honestly with students, staff, parents, administration, central office personnel, researchers, and just about everyone around them because they are all valuable resources which a teacher needs in order to be a successful teacher. As Collinson (1996) states,

> Exemplary teachers have developed high levels of interpersonal knowledge necessary for working well with children and other adults (e.g., open-mindedness, empathy, and honest communication). Teachers who develop their interpersonal knowledge learn to think in an ever expanding scope of professional

> community. To do so requires personal and organizational knowledge that allows teachers to understand many different perspectives and facets of issues. (p.3)

Therefore, interpersonal knowledge is very important to exemplary teaching because people skills and communication are a large part of teaching. The final component which completes the triad of knowledge and therefore the exemplary teacher is intrapersonal knowledge.

Intrapersonal knowledge. The final aspect in Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge is intrapersonal knowledge. Interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge are sometimes confused, "Whereas interpersonal knowledge focuses primarily on human interactions and relationships, intrapersonal knowledge emphasizes understanding of oneself and the capacity for introspection and reflection" (Collinson, 1996, p.6). Collinson further explains, "Intrapersonal knowledge represents individual ways of thinking and ways of being; this form of knowledge appears to be the least studied in the triad of knowledge" (Collinson, 1996, p.6). Accordingly, one who possesses intrapersonal knowledge: (1) has a disposition toward continuous learning; (2) possesses the increasingly refined use of reflection; (3)possesses the development of an ethic of care; (4) and is concerned with constant renewal.

Collinson (1996) explains the aforementioned qualities in greater detail. Ethic of care includes: caring; compassion; respect for self and

others; understanding self and others; giving to and receiving from others; and courage. A work ethic includes: pride of effort; dedication; perseverance; and doing one's best. A disposition towards continuous learning includes: curiosity; creativity; risk taking; problem finding and solving; responsibility; and flexibility. Collinson (1996) also goes into further detail by what she means by dispositions,

> Exemplary teachers dispositions include: curiosity to ask questions and pursue inquiry; skill and maturity in defining the precise problem or questions; capacity to think toward the future in order to imagine courses of action and their likely consequences; responsibility for one's decisions; willingness to risk admitting error or misjudgment via the evaluation process; intellectual flexibility to think about issues from many perspectives and live with ambiguity and uncertainty; and optimism to believe that changing or altering teaching practices can improve learning for students. (p.8)

According to Collinson (1996), exemplary teachers have also developed a disposition of thinking toward the future and the disposition toward optimism as well as their capacity for "habitual and deliberate reflection,"

> Taken as a whole, the disposition towards continuous learning and the disposition toward reflection represent a recognizable way of thinking. Related dispositions include curiosity, creativity, risk taking, problem finding and solving, responsibility, and flexibility. What sets good thinkers apart is their abiding tendencies to explore, inquire, seek clarity, take intellectual risks, and think critically and imaginatively. (p.104)

Yager and Bonnstetter (1990) further iterate this in their statement,

> Exemplary teachers: are seen as learners themselves and as facilitators and collaborators in student learning; seek out in-service assistance as they seek to grow and improve; are concerned with

> constant renewal, have great enthusiasm; are discontented with status quo; have boundless energy; are themselves models of active inquiry; and have high expectations of themselves. (p.4)

Intrapersonal knowledge is concerned with the inner self of the exemplary teacher. Fenwick (1996) believes that exemplary teachers do not apply rules like 'technicians' but continually move, sense, act, create, and continue to move among others while constantly adjusting understandings. Because of this, intrapersonal knowledge is very difficult to train or prescribe, "Since teaching depends to a large degree on how a person sees, acts, and lives (teaching and modeling), one could argue that the development of dispositions and ethics is very important in teacher education. It is, however, such a neglected part of teacher education as to be almost nonexistent" (Collinson, 1996, p.7). Thus, intrapersonal knowledge is a very important part of the triad of knowledge and therefore to the exemplary teacher.

In summary, professional knowledge, interpersonal knowledge, and intrapersonal knowledge constitute Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge. According to Collinson (1996), if a teacher is excellent in all three of the areas he or she is an exemplary teacher. Collinson's (1996) model is very important because it encompasses so many qualities that are important for teachers to posses.

> If becoming an exemplary teacher is a developmental process and career long journey, if increasing the number of exemplary teachers is a desirable goal, and if development of the triad of

> knowledge is a means to this goal, then teacher educators and policy-makers have a responsibility to find ways to help more teachers become exemplary. (Collinson, 1996, p.14)

While characteristics of exemplary teachers are an important consideration, it is important for them to apply to the junior high school context. Therefore, it is important to consider the aspects of the junior high school which include: the students who attend the junior high schools, the junior high school's structure, the junior high school climate, and the focus of junior high schools.

Aspects of the Junior High School

Junior high school students. An interesting part of a junior high school is the students who attend them. Fenwick (1996) found that

> Teachers described adolescents as experiencing confusing physical changes and growth spurts, inner tensions between needs for autonomy and needs for dependence, anxiety about appearance, experiments with humor and personality roles, identity confusion, intense and transient wide-ranging emotional experiences, and new demands for responsibility and interpersonal skills. (p. 11)

Throughout their research on junior high school students, Sierer and Winfield (1988) discovered similar characteristics,

> It was found that early adolescents were far more confused, less secure and experienced, more anxious, and less integrated than their older counterparts. It was also determined that adolescents were less willing to wait for future gratification and were less comfortable with themselves. It has also been found that during this period, friends and peer relationships are extremely important. This age

> group is very self-conscious, has less positive attitudes, and view others (parents, peers, and teachers) as seeing them more unfavorably. (p.2)

Sierer and Winfield (1988) further add that

> Adolescents characteristics include the search for self-identity, a need for independence from parents, reliance on friends and peer groups. A period which is sometimes referred to as being 'traumatic' for a child of this age. Difficulty of schoolwork, negative peer, privacy, classes, less control, friends, and newness of junior high school were the areas of greatest concern to the students. (p.4)

A study by Kohut and Range (1986) reveals the following challenges junior high school adolescents face each day,

> Some tasks encountered by junior high school students include: Developing increased independence from parents and adults; developing increased social relations with peers; learning to accept themselves as individuals; learning the necessary academic skills and cognitive processes required by society; and developing a set of appropriate values and attitudes for directing their behavior. (p.38)

Junior high school students are striving to belong and participate as Fenwick (1996) states,

> For the adolescent, the communities of practice in which he or she desire fuller "legitimate participation" are various overlapping clique groups and sub-cultures comprising the broader peer community of the school culture. Actions which qualify a youngster as a fuller participant in this adolescent community (note passing, rough housing, testing the rules, creating diversion, being 'cool') often contradicts the behavioral norms designated and enforced by the teacher. In other words, in order to move centripetally towards the center of peer communities, the adolescent sometimes must move centrifically away from the center of the teacher-constructed classroom image of the adult community looming in the adolescent's future. (p.11)

Fenwick (1996) also describes the boundless energy and restlessness of junior high school students,

> Adolescents are a constantly bubbling cauldron of physical energy. Many of them chewed and tapped pencils, drummed the tops and kicked the legs of their desks, rattled objects in their pockets and pencil cases. Energy was expressed through voice as well as motion, giggling, sometimes screaming, blurting out sounds of mock pain, disgust, satisfaction. (p.9)

Fenwick (1996) further stresses the aforementioned point with her statement,

> The notion of 'the body electric' seems to capture the fidgety restlessness and what seem to be raw, unpredictable spurts of mood and behavior that bubble in complex dynamics underneath the tidy classroom structures. The difference in adolescence is the unpredictable and dramatic shifts day to day from extremes in behavior, and even conceptual knowledge. (p.21)

Junior high school students are unpredictable and inconsistent beings who are struggling to belong and to discover who they really are. They are adolescents "who exhibit a wide range of anxiety and insecurity" (Mitchell, 1986, p. 2). They are young people whose minds and bodies are rapidly developing as they experience growth spurts and social awakenings. Due to the uniqueness of these individuals, the schools which they attend must accommodate and nurture these developing human beings. It is important then to consider also the structure, climate, and focus of the junior high school.

The structure of the junior high school. In 1909, in the states of Ohio and California, an organization was developed to bridge the gap between elementary and high schools; this school was called the junior high school (Sierer & Winfield, 1988).

The junior high school is very different from the elementary school. According to Berndt and Hawkins (1985),

> The transition to junior high school may be stressful, however, because it is accompanied by many changes that require corresponding adaptations on the part of the students. Typically, junior high schools are larger and different in organization than elementary schools. Students interact with a greater variety of teachers and take courses in a wider range of subjects. Moreover, disciplinary practices and rules are likely to be different from those in elementary school. Teachers are likely to expect more of students, because they perceive the students as more mature. Transition to junior high school is difficult for many adolescents. Adolescents new to junior high school feel unsure of themselves and self-conscious. (p.2)

Elementary schools consistently have stronger linkages than junior high schools (Firestone, 1984, p.1). Typically, junior high schools are larger than elementary schools and more complex in that they are departmentalized and teachers specialize by subject area (Firestone, 1984, p.16). Therefore, students enter a larger school with less centralization and with much more diversity and independence. Basically stated, it is the transition between the strong linkages of elementary school and the independence and decentralization of high school, "A geometric progression is apparent, with elementary schools having the strongest

consensus and greatest centralization, followed by junior high schools, with senior high schools having the weakest consensus and least centralization. (Firestone, 1984, p.14).

Therefore, the structure of the junior high school is basically in the middle of the structures of elementary and high school in its centralization, linkages, and independence. The climate of the junior high school is also much different from that of the elementary or high school. School climate has been an important focus of research in the past with junior high schools being a very important focus due to the instability of their clients.

Climate of the junior high school. According to the literature, the climate of the junior high school is much different than that of the elementary or high school. Fenwick believes "Boys, girls, Monday morning or Friday afternoon, different sizes and shapes, moods and personality, developmental stages, social positioning of the movement beliefs and cultural identity -- the climate of a junior high school" (p.5).

Because junior high schools are full of developing adolescents, the climate is definitely shaped accordingly,

> For the adolescent, the communities of practice in which he or she desire fuller "legitimate participation" are various overlapping clique groups and sub-cultures comprising the broader peer community of the school culture. Actions which qualify a youngster as a fuller participant in this adolescent community (note passing, rough housing, testing the rules, creating diversion, being 'cool') often contradicts the behavioral norms designated and enforced by

> the teacher. In other words, in order to move centripetally towards the center of peer communities, the adolescent sometimes must move centrifically away from the center of the teacher-constructed classroom image of the adult community looming in the adolescent's future. (Fenwick, 1996, p.11)

Thus, because of the developing adolescent behaviors, the climate of instability is inherent throughout the school and, of course, in the classroom,

> When teachers managed the space of the classroom they were engaged in balancing many tensions simultaneously: the tension between protecting and punishing students to create a 'safe place' for all: the tensions between 'work' and 'play' embodied in the manipulation of structures; and the tension between teacher control and student agency in constructing the place. (Fenwick, 1996, p.20)

The literature states that the junior high school definitely has a climate of its own, which is reflective of the clients who roam their buildings day after day. These clients, junior high school students, also require a specific focus of pedagogy and understanding to accommodate their ever-changing minds and bodies. Thus, the next area of concentration is the focus of the junior high school.

Focus of the junior high school. The final area the literature addresses about junior high schools is their focus or purpose. Because of the junior high school students' developmental instability, junior high school teachers must have a philosophy which is not only to teach subject matter, but also to teach and model life skills and adaptation skills,

"Teachers were clear about their roots of their commitment to their students, not simply to care for them and teach them whatever curriculum was provincially prescribed, but their commitment to share values of right and reasonable living with adolescents" (Fenwick, 1996, p.21). It is important teachers understand the complexity of this adolescent age group, "Much teacher knowledge is developed and functions at a tacit level of understanding of adolescents, of what works of the school culture and tradition, of the underlying tensions and dynamics rolling about in the classroom space" (Fenwick, 1996, p.5).

Fenwick (1996) found many commonalties among the foci of junior high schools,

> Respect for other people, including people's personal space and property, and others' authority where relevant, was a central value described by many of the teachers. Another was accountability: teachers often referred to students' need to learn to take responsibility for their duties, and to accept the consequences for their actions and their speech. 'Hard work' was a phrase used frequently by the teachers. In the school setting 'hard work' refers generally to student willingness to attend and concentrate, and diligence in completing teacher-prescribed independent assignments. Hard work seems to be the pathway to success. Teachers also believed students needed to learn to 'do what you're told', a value of compliance reinforced by much teacher talk and action. Learning to control one's body and voice to create a work environment that is predominantly quiet, still, and orderly appeared to be a primary value generating most classroom routines. (p.12)

The focus of a junior high school is also much different then that of an elementary or high school. In Fenwick's (1996) study "teachers spoke explicitly of the junior high school and their classrooms as preparation

places: readying adolescents for the demands of high school, the demands of the workplace, the demands of society" (p. 13). As well, respect for other people, including other people's space and property was a central value of junior high schools. Accountability, taking responsibilities for their duties, and to accept consequences for their actions and speech were also stressed (Fenwick, 1996). Hard work, which generally referred to student willingness to attend and concentrate, and diligence in completing teacher-prescribed independent assignments were perceived as the reliable pathway to success (Fenwick, 1996). Fenwick (1996) also found that learning to control one's body and voice to create a work environment that is predominantly quiet, still, and orderly was stressed. Fenwick (1996) sums it up best by her statement "the teacher's role is supposedly to groom adolescent behavior for fuller participation in the wider society where teachers themselves are situated as responsible compliant 'insider' participants, a community which is yet vague and far removed from the adolescent's immediate world of practice" (p. 13).

Summary

This literature review addresses the triad of knowledge of the exemplary teacher. As well, it also focuses on the aspects of a junior high school with respect to the students, structure, climate, and the focus of the junior high school.

The literature addresses the many aspects of the junior high school effectively. What was ascertained, however, was that literature on "exemplary junior high school teachers" was non-existent.

The literature suggests that because the junior high school years are such an awkward stage for many adolescents, teaching junior high school students requires different knowledge than teaching elementary or high school students. Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge is a generalization of all exemplary teachers, not specifically exemplary junior high school teachers. Also, in Collinson's model, all three of the types of knowledge are given equal importance, whereas in junior high school, having intrapersonal knowledge may be the most important. It may be shown that the possession of strong professional knowledge and interpersonal knowledge are consequently related to strong intrapersonal knowledge. Also, research must be done to discover if more than the triad of knowledge is needed to become an exemplary junior high school teacher. Therefore, it is evident that this topic definitely required further investigation of what makes a junior high school teacher exemplary!

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Method of Study

Chapter Introduction

The focus of this study was to identify what makes some junior high school teachers exemplary. To obtain a full description of the essence of exemplary junior high school teachers a qualitative research design was chosen. A combination of deductive analysis, which stemmed from the review of the literature, and an inductive approach were used for this research. I entered participants' environments to gather first hand information through interviews and written accounts

Research Design

The purpose of this chapter is to address (a) the participants, (b) the pilot study, (c) gathering of data, (d) description of the participants, (e) data analysis techniques, (f) data trustworthiness, and (g) delimitations and limitations of the study.

Participants. Participants were selected from randomly chosen junior high schools in the Edmonton area. For each school telephoned, I described my study to the principal, then asked the principal if he or she would

nominate some exemplary junior high school teachers. This was done until I had identified five schools in which the principals agreed to participate.

The selection of exemplary teachers was done by principals in the chosen schools. All principals were given a nomination form to fill out (see Appendix B). Each form included a brief description of the study and its purpose. As well, a list of criteria of possible characteristics of exemplary teachers was provided to help guide the respondents in making their choices. Respondents were invited to identify their own criteria if they believed mine were inadequate. Each principal was asked to identify as many teachers that they believed fit the criteria. Those teachers were contacted and asked if they would like to participate in my study. I did this until five teachers agreed. Therefore, five exemplary junior high school teachers were used for this study.

Pilot study. Principals nominated two exemplary junior high school teachers for the pilot study. The two teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. The interviews were transcribed and coded using both a deductive and an inductive approach.

It appeared from the pilot study that there is evidence that junior high school students are unique and must be treated differently from elementary or high school students. It also appeared that there were three areas which made up an exemplary junior high school teacher. Each

exemplary junior high school teacher in my pilot study agreed that professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge were all important, with importance increasing in ascending order. As well, from the pilot study there was strong evidence that supported the notion that intrapersonal knowledge was the most vital and important aspect when it came to being an exemplary junior high school teacher; so much in fact that the other two depended on it. The pilot study also revealed that there were other aspects that an exemplary junior high school teacher must possess which were extraneous to the triad of knowledge.

Data gathering. The research was conducted using semi-structured interviews. The initial task before the interview was a paper and pencil questionnaire designed to elicit description from the respondents of those qualities each associated with the concept of an exemplary junior high school teacher. The semi-structured interview consisted of semi-structured questions, discussion and narrative exchanges which were recorded on an audio tape. The questions I used in the questionnaire and the interview were drawn from my original sub-questions (see Appendix A).

The interview took place in the participants' usual surroundings (e.g., classroom) in approximately a one hour time frame. Each interview was conducted individually. An ethics review had been submitted and

approved to assure that the University of Alberta guidelines concerning research involving human subjects were followed. Confidentiality was assured to each individual. Teachers were advised that if they wished, they could drop out of the study at any time.

The recorded interviews were then transcribed. Copies of the transcripts were provided to each respondent to allow the teachers to check their remarks for clarity of content and intent. Further contact was made with the teachers to discuss any changes or deletions made to the data.

After the data had been coded an audit trail followed. A colleague read over the transcripts and formed her own themes. The results from her coding were then compared with my findings. This allowed for additional themes to emerge which I may have overlooked as well as reinforce the findings that were previously found.

Description of the participants. Five exemplary junior high school teachers were interviewed for this study. The following is a brief description of the five exemplary junior high school teachers. I have chosen pseudonyms to replace their actual names to protect their identities and ensure confidentiality.

The first person I interviewed was a very spirited lady full of energy and enthusiasm. Iris had been teaching for about 15 years. Some of her years of teaching were done at the elementary school level and some at the

high school level. For the last five years she had been teaching specifically junior high school. Iris was a very emotional and passionate woman; evidence of this being the tears which came throughout the interview as she answered the questions. Iris loved her job very much and loved teaching junior high school students. Iris was very spontaneous, had a great sense of humor, and a loud voice, so one could picture her doing an act at a stand up comedy club with the audience rolling in the aisles. On her serious side she was very sincere, sweet, caring, insightful, reflective and extremely dedicated to her students and her family.

The next person interviewed was Sara. Sara had been teaching approximately ten years. Most of her years teaching had been at the junior high school level but some were at the elementary and senior high level as well. Sara was very positive, down to earth, and friendly. Sara was a very dedicated teacher who spent a phenomenal amount of time at her school marking, planning, and everything else one could imagine. Over the past few months I have come to know Sara as a friend and I am still amazed at how much time she spends working at her school. Sara was a very calm, cool, and collected person. She was a very firm but fair person with an aggressive go-getter business type personality. Sara was very dedicated to people and cared greatly for her students. I found her to be very open, trusting, and giving. Sara was highly motivated which was why, at such a young age, she already had a Masters Degree and "about a million other

things on the go." As well, I found that under her tough exterior was a very vulnerable and sensitive person.

My next interview was with one of the sweetest people I have ever had the privilege of meeting in my entire life. Debbie could only be described as a caring, giving, dedicated, passionate, loving, open, warm, safe, emotional, great hearted mother figure. In fact, she constantly referred to herself as "everybody's mother." Debbie had been teaching primarily junior high school for the past 15 years, but in that time she had also taught at the elementary level. It was highly evident that she cared very much for her students and felt that she had the greatest job in the world. With her gentle soft spoken voice and her great motherly characteristics, I could see why everyone considered her their "mom."

The next interview was with Greg. Greg had been teaching approximately 30 years. Greg was old enough to retire but said that retirement was the last thing he wanted to do right now because he had just finally figured out what this "teaching stuff" was all about. Greg had taught all three levels of school (elementary, junior, and high school) but loved junior high school the best so that was where he wanted to stay for the rest of his teaching career. Greg had a very dry but hilarious sense of humor. I found myself laughing through most of the interview. Greg was a very positive and confident person who exuded a great amount of wisdom when he spoke. He was very insightful and one can tell that Greg had used his

habit of continuous reflection well. Greg had a personality that came across as very warm and friendly. Greg was a very "smooth talker" which was probably how he was able to convince his students to work hard and achieve their best. Greg was very dedicated to his career and could still be found devoting an immense amount of time at his school, even after his 30 years of teaching.

My final interview was with Wes. Wes had also been teaching about 30 years so if he wished he could retire this year. He, like Greg, didn't feel he was ready yet because he still loved his job so much. Wes had taught all three levels and had also been a junior high school administrator for a few years. Wes returned to the classroom because he felt that the classroom was the real place to make the difference, not from a stuffy office in the front of a school. Wes was very proud to be a teacher and believed that without a doubt, teaching junior high school was the best job in the world. Wes was a very wise man with a vast amount of experience in the teaching field. I found Wes to be very legitimate and direct. Despite his bluntness he was a very humble person who welcomed any advice or pieces of wisdom you may want to offer him. I also found Wes to be very reflective and insightful. Overall, Wes was a jolly person with a welcoming personality and a quick wit.

The previously mentioned teachers provided me with a great amount of insight into my study on exemplary junior high school teachers. Their

expertise and knowledge of my research topic was invaluable and I am very grateful for their contribution.

Trustworthiness of the data and the analysis. After each interview, I presented each participant with a copy of the transcripts. This gave the participants the opportunity to question entries they did not understand or agree with.

I utilized two methods to collect the research data. One was a paper and pencil questionnaire and the other a semi-structured oral interview.

Trustworthiness of the data was also enhanced by an audit trail by a colleague to see if he or she arrived at similar themes. The colleague read over the transcripts and formed her own themes. The results from her coding were then compared with my findings. This allowed for additional themes to emerge which I may have overlooked as well as reinforce previous findings. A member check was also done. Each teacher in my study was given the findings from the data and then he or she was invited to provide feedback and give suggestions.

Delimitations and limitations. Because of the in-depth nature of the study, one delimitation was that the number of participants was five, which was a small but workable number. Although the results of the study are not generalizable because of the small number, great efforts are given to provide detailed descriptions of the contextual factors so that the findings

can be transferred. Also, only one interview was conducted with each teacher. A further delimitation is that the teachers were only chosen from the Edmonton area, but the reader can still relate the themes to other demographics.

An additional delimitation the principals ability to identify exemplary teachers. Some principals may not be aware of many of the practices that occur in the teachers' classrooms. Principals were still able to identify the exemplary teachers by student feedback as well as through colleague interaction. Also, most principals in the study should have spent some time in most of the teachers' classrooms to identify those who may be exemplary.

I was limited by my ability to perceive and understand the meaning of the data as it was meant by the respondents. Also, the teachers were limited in identifying exactly what qualities made them exemplary. In order to alleviate this limitation I did a pilot study to familiarize myself with the research, interview, and coding process. A member check was also conducted. The interview transcriptions and findings were sent back to the participants to allow them to review and clarify anything that they felt was inaccurate.

Another limitation may have been the possible attitudes and dispositions of the principals of the school. Some exemplary teachers may have been overlooked if they were not popular with the principal. The

principals who did participate, however, were still able to adequately identify exemplary teachers in the school.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the research design. Participant selection was described; descriptions of the participants, and an overall description of the pilot study were provided. Steps taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the study data were described as were the methods used in data gathering and analysis. A list of the delimitations and limitations of the study was also included.

The following chapters present the findings. A qualitative study using semi-structured interviews was chosen to acquire an understanding of exemplary junior high school teachers. Chapter Four provides a structured account of the outcomes as a result of inductive and inductive analysis. The deductive approach stems from the review of the literature. An inductive approach is used to address the findings which were not incorporated in the deductive themes.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS: A DEDUCTIVE AND AN INDUCTIVE APPROACH

Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover what makes some junior high school teachers exemplary. A qualitative study using a semi-structured interview was chosen in order to acquire an understanding of exemplary junior high school teachers.

A deductive approach stemming from the review of the literature and the sub-questions was first utilized in this chapter. Following this, an inductive approach was used to code information into themes to address those which emerged from the interview data which were not incorporated in the deductive themes.

Deductive Analysis

The three themes which were derived from the review of the literature and the sub-questions were as follows: (1) what the phrase "exemplary junior high school teacher" meant to each teacher; (2) a description of the junior high school student; and (3) Collinson's (1996)

triad of knowledge which includes professional knowledge, interpersonal knowledge, and intrapersonal knowledge.

What the Phrase "Exemplary Junior High School Teacher" Meant to Them

One of the first questions I asked at each of the five interviews was "what does the phrase 'exemplary junior high school teacher' mean to you?" I believed this was a valuable question because it gave some insight into the participants' personalities and revealed their thoughts and beliefs on the word "exemplary." Hedges and Paprican (1987) believed that "excellence in teaching involves a combination of ingredients all blended together in proper proportion not unlike the process of making a good cake or pie" (p.3). The following findings incorporate the five original viewpoints of the participants of this study on what they believed an exemplary junior high school teacher was.

Iris was puzzled by the word "exemplary" so she looked up the word in the dictionary,

> Well, when I first heard that word exemplary, I thought 'oooooo,' this is something really good because it has an 'x' in it. For me, that's like excellent. I said 'oh exemplary, oh that's a nice word,' but I didn't really know what it meant. So I looked it up in the dictionary and it read 'a model for people around you.' I thought 'yeah that's me' because I want my students to learn things, and not just the curriculum and books, but to learn things from me. I have to model in a good way if I want them to go out into the world and do the right thing. In my classroom, I have 28 students out there

> modeling me; well that's pretty special. It makes me feel good. I tell them stories about when I was in junior high and the kind of things we did, how I felt, how other students around me felt, how I even felt about some teachers, and how some teachers felt about me. The students really like that because that's where they are in their lives. So I believe what I do is modeling and I believe I do a good job at that.

After thinking about it further, Iris added,

> I see myself as exemplary now that I see myself as being a model for other people -- I'm proud of that. If people see me like that, then I'm proud of that because that's what I do, but I never thought of it that way. That's just the way I do things. I'm people centered.

Iris believed that an exemplary junior high school teacher is one who is a good model for junior high school students. At first Iris did not believe she was worthy of this title but after convincing herself that it is just someone who is a great role model, she could admit to being exemplary. It wasn't until later on in the interview that she and I discovered that there was more to her being exemplary than just modeling.

Sara's answer to this question in her interview basically concurred with the same thoughts as Iris on what an exemplary junior high school teacher was,

> I think it means that you lead by example, or in other words, you are a role model. It means that people around you, like kids or colleagues, admire traits in you. It's values that they see in you that help develop values in them. It is leading by example and them seeing your actions follow your words that are important.

Sara believed, like Iris, that in order to be exemplary one has to be a good role model for the junior high school students he or she teaches. Sara felt

that she was fortunate enough in her life to have great role models, so she wants to carry on the cycle and provide her students with the same. Again, it was interesting to me that Sara also felt that her role modeling was the only real reason she was nominated as exemplary.

The next exemplary junior high school teacher to be asked "what does the phrase 'exemplary junior high school teacher' mean to you?" was Debbie. She felt that it is teachers who have

> the ability to connect with the kids. It is what they do in the classroom and how they do it. They are very organized, they are able to motivate kids, and they don't seem to have all of the problems or the hustle and bustle that the rest of us do. That's what I think.

When I probed further she added

> I thought that for teachers to be exemplary they have to be able to connect with kids. And if they can't connect with the kids, no matter how strong they are in their subject area, they won't be successful as a teacher, especially in junior high. I think that goes for all the levels, but more in junior high because they are going to eat you up if you can't connect with them, establish a rapport with them, and develop some sort of relationship with them. They have to care about you. I know a lot of teachers who say, 'ahhh it doesn't matter, I have enough friends,' but the students have to care about you in order to work for you.

Therefore, Debbie believed that an exemplary junior high school teacher is one who can connect with her students and really cares about them. Debbie did not feel that she was an exemplary teacher, but as you will see further on, as far as connecting and caring, she was above and beyond exemplary.

When Greg, my fourth participant, was asked what he thought an exemplary junior high school teacher was he replied,

> I think it means you are having an effect on the kids. It doesn't necessarily mean that your lessons are all perfect. It doesn't mean that you're remembering everything you should and doing every duty in the school, but that you are having an effect. You're effective and the kids perceive you as being effective and they are learning things from you and they appreciate learning things from you.

When I asked Greg if he thought he was exemplary he stated,

> I see myself as more effective then some, but mostly because I work more, that's a given. I work long hours. I usually get here at six in the morning and frequently work through my weekends still, even after all these years. So if you work more you get more. I like teaching and school, so in that sense I see myself as exemplary.

Greg believed that an exemplary junior high school teacher is basically one who is effective and puts in long hours. Again, because Greg obviously contributed much more than the above to his teaching, I found it very interesting that his answer was so simplistic.

When I asked Wes for his answer he was at first quite uncomfortable answering it.

> I was much embarrassed by the phrase because I think it means I'm a good guy better than the rest. I think it means, 'here's a real hot shot guy' and I think, unfortunately, a lot of people take that to mean better than the rest or better than other people. But I think an exemplary junior high teacher is one who slogs away with the kids and takes everything they do. I'm always a little reluctant when awards come up for junior high teaching. I've been privileged to have one of those awards at the provincial level. I'm just one of the many people I work with. I call it a crap shoot and whoever just happens to get it, gets it. I teach with a great bunch of people where I'm teaching now so I guess I'm privileged. So I think to be chosen as 'exemplary' might just mean you've been seen. There are so many teachers out there that do a good job who are never given an award or labeled 'exemplary.'

After Wes de-emphasized his exemplary status he provided me with what he thought might have been the reason he was nominated.

> I think it's one who really can work with the kids, and I've mentioned that I think that's the characteristic or skill that I'm blessed with. I can be with kids and they will let me be with them. They will still share their lives with me and allow me to do the same with them, and I think that's a pretty exemplary thing; to be able to have that is a pretty neat privilege. You get to know that kind of stuff just by the way they react to you. I think if you have your relationship with the kids, that's what counts. Yeah, you need curriculum. I happened to be privileged in that I've done a lot of curriculum development work in the area I've taught in for 30 years as both as a consultant, as a teacher, as a writer, and now again as a teacher. But I really think the honest thing is, you a relationship with kids, and if you don't have that nothing else is going to work.

Even though Wes believed that it was a more or less a "fluke" that he was nominated as an exemplary junior high school teacher, he did feel that his gift of being able to be with junior high school students may make him exemplary. He felt that because he had such great relationships with his students he was an exemplary junior high school teacher in that sense.

Summary

This section addressed what the phrase "exemplary junior high school teacher" meant to my five participants. Iris and Sara felt that an exemplary junior high school teacher is one who is a great role model or example for the junior high school students. Debbie felt that it is someone who cares for and connects with his or her students. Greg felt an

exemplary junior high school teacher is one who is effective with the students and puts in long hours. And Wes believed an exemplary junior high school teacher is one who has the gift of being with and 'slogging away with' junior high school students. The next section focuses on the five teachers' descriptions of junior high school students.

Junior High School Students

According to the Fenwick (1996), "Teachers described adolescents as experiencing confusing physical changes and growth spurts, inner tensions between needs for autonomy and dependence, anxiety about appearance, experiments with humor and personality roles, identity confusion, intense and transient wide-ranging experiences, and new demands for responsibility and interpersonal skills" (p.8). In the five interviews, I asked each exemplary junior high school teacher if he or she could describe junior high school students. The following are the responses I received.

According to Iris, junior high school students are basically in the middle of the elementary and high school years developmentally. Having taught all three levels, she sees junior high school students as people seeking independence while at the same time needing a great amount of support. Junior high school is the forum in which a great amount of experimentation and testing is done. They are trying to discover ways to fit

in and become adults. Also, as adolescents, their bodies are developing and changing at such a fast and confusing rate that many are unsure of what to make of it. As Iris stated,

> Junior high students are a mixture of a variety of personalities that are growing in many ways. The students are child-like souls going through a new dimension in their life where they want to break away and become a little bit more independent from their parents, teachers, and the people around them. They want to break off and start doing things on their own but at the same time they feel the need for support. They need to be supported by their friends, their parents, and the people around them. When they are breaking off into independence they are looking to the adults and modeling them because that's the way they want to be; or that's the way they are going to be because that to them is grown up. The first example that comes to mind is when my junior high school students model adults smoking even though we tell them not to smoke. They believe they will be grown up if they smoked. Then they do that and they get sick from it or they get caught, and then all of sudden they become these children again who need you.

Iris admitted she sometimes forgets that junior high school students are young developing children because some of their child-like souls are in such adult-size packages. Also, because they are in such a rush to grow up, as a teacher she sometimes forgets that she has to try to slow them down a bit so they don't miss any experiences along the way: experiences that children of their age should be enjoying.

> 'Please be there for me,' is what teaching junior high school is all about. As a teacher you have to treat them in an understanding way because I find, with junior high students and the size of them now, six foot two or whatever, I look at them as adults. I have to remind myself that this isn't an adult, this is a child who still needs to be told 'it's OK.' They still need that comfort, so it lowers my expectations when I have my expectations too high for them. I still think it's important to have high expectations for them, because then

> they will strive for that. But if it gets overly done on my part, I have to back down a bit and remember that this child is only 13 or 14, they are not in their 20's or 30's like some teachers or adults are. They are in such a rush to grow up that sometimes I have to tell them 'slow down or you are going miss it.' That's where I see junior high at.

As noted earlier, because Iris has taught all three levels of school (elementary, junior high, and high school), she could offer some insight on what she believed the differences are between the three levels.

> In high school, many of the students are at the tail end of their physical growth. Most have started to get more experience making choices and decisions. As well, they are becoming a little bit more confident in themselves. Junior high is where the students develop that confidence and is where they learn how to act, how to feel, and how to belong. In high school most know how to get into situations to become a part of a relationship with people, their feelings start to get a little bit more evened out, and they are not so moody and emotional in how they react to things. Junior high is the period when the child-like behaviors are mixed with the adult wants and everything else one encounters in junior high. In high school they've learned to control that behavior. In elementary school, when a child has a temper tantrum, is upset, or whatever we deal with it like we would a child so we comfort him or her and we say it's 'OK.' It's much different when a junior high flies off the handle or gets very upset. An upset junior high school student is an upset child in an adult like body.

Iris felt that junior high school students are basically "a group of students all coming from different directions and are growing at different speeds." Overall, Iris felt junior high school students were "child-like souls in adult-type bodies." Iris also stressed that where they are in their experiences, emotions, growth, maturity, and wants and needs are all different.

Sara felt that junior high school students are in the period of their lives where they really want to fit in and be accepted. They are adolescents searching for identity and recognition.

> They are easily influenced and they want to be accepted by their peers, but at the same time, you as a teacher, have probably the greatest years of influence as well. They are looking for recognition and a lot of them are looking for praise and extra attention. I guess the other thing is that they are into a sense of fairness, so you have to be really consistent with them. They're looking for who they are and are searching for their identities. Or in other words, their sense of identity starts to form and they need to find out where they fit into the picture.

Sara, also having had experience teaching all three levels, believed that junior high school students are different from high school or elementary school students.

> First of all, it is their physical development and the discrepancy between their emotional development, so there's a lot of confusion about what's going on. They are highly emotional human beings. I think too, they are at an age where peers are probably the most important. In elementary school they don't have the peer pressure as much to get into things or not get into things. And in high school most of them have now got some direction.

Therefore, Sara saw junior high school students as easily influenced young people striving for acceptance and recognition. Sara also believed junior high school students are a group of adolescents coping with the discrepancy between their emotional and physical development.

Debbie described junior high school students as very emotional and inconsistent. She felt that junior high school students are people who want to be accepted but they don't know exactly how to do that. She also felt that

they are adolescents pulled in many directions by many influential forces all coupled with "raging hormones."

> I think there are a great amount of emotions there, the ups and the downs and the highs and the lows. I think that they are really trying hard to be accepted. They want you to accept them and they want their friends to accept them. They are not sure how to go about doing that so they get themselves into trouble or they get into relationships that cause trouble. They don't mean for these things to happen but there are just so many emotions flying all over the place, coupled with their hormones, which makes them very different people from the rest of society.

Debbie does not have much high school experience, but she did teach at the elementary level, so she offered her insight on the difference between elementary and junior high school students.

> I think elementary students are more focused and they still want to please the teacher and the teacher is still placed on a pedestal. Girls aren't crazy about the boys in the same way they are in junior high and the boys aren't into the girls yet. They can stay on a track and still keep working that way, and it's not the interpersonal that becomes the most important. Whereas in junior high school, the interpersonal is the focus much more than learning the subject material.

Debbie thus believed that junior high school students are highly emotional beings who are trying desperately to be accepted by the people around them. Junior high school students are hormonal adolescents who are in a period of discovery much different from that of their elementary years.

Greg felt that junior high students are different from elementary and high school students, but much more emotionally and physically different than intellectually.

> I would say junior high school students are most different from the other two levels physically and emotionally. Surprising though, intellectually there isn't as big a spread as a lot of people believe. It's quite possible to have a child in grade six doing grade nine work or vice versa. Personality and temperaments are different because they are developing. They have different needs in grades seven, eight and nine because they are developing differently and at a different pace.

Even though Greg wanted to be careful not to stereotype junior high school students, he did feel the group behavior of junior high school students "is essentially different because of the development stage they are all going through." He also added that "they are trying to find their identity and self-assurance which are very important needs in the junior high school years."

Greg did not offer too much toward this question, because he did not want junior high school students to be stereotyped more than they already are. But despite this, he did admit that they were different from elementary and high school students because they are going through adolescence.

Wes, who has had a vast amount of experience with elementary, junior high, and high school students, felt that junior high school students, like the school level, are in the middle. They are in the middle of development in just about every facet of their lives,

> I think junior high school students are right in the middle. I think they bring a little bit of the elementary uncertainty and the

needs of wanting to please and also the need of wanting to make their own decisions and be on their own. So the students go from 'it's none of your business,' to 'could you lend me a dollar.' The basic difference, in a nut shell, is that they're in between; they've got some of the qualities of both elementary and high school students. Junior high school students are a ball of emotion. You've got to learn and understand that you are working with a whole bunch of confused students and what you want to do is try to guide them through their adolescent development.

Wes continued his dialogue by stating that they were people 'uncapped,' or put another way 'full of confused and uncontrolled open emotion.'

> Maybe you don't want to know some of things you see in the classroom. Actually, they are really neat people. They are spontaneous, and for the most part they are bright. Junior high school students are very open and they like to do things. They posses uncontrolled emotion because they haven't learned that you don't do certain things or you shouldn't do certain things. I think basically they are open and they're friendly. Then you've got the other kind who will come in really depressed because he or she's been having a rough day with mom and dad so they can be really quiet. So what you have is examples of all the human emotion in one batch of students. In a junior high school classroom there is erratic behavior because many times the students don't know what they want or what to do. Some of them don't even know that they are doing half the things they do. They are open, they are spontaneous, they are loud, they're quiet, they're people uncapped. Junior high school students haven't been capped yet. They've gone a little bit beyond the elementary school stage because in elementary school they still wanted to please, they wanted to do things, and they could still look at the teacher as the total boss. In junior high you'll get that, but you also get them going one step beyond and will push the limits. They haven't got to the high school stage yet where they learn 'God I better shut up, I better not do this, I better not do that.' So I just see junior high school students as 'open emotion.'

Wes felt that junior high school students are "gut for the most part and you've got a whole range of everything in there." As Fenwick (1996)

stated, "Adolescents are a constantly bubbling cauldron of physical energy. Many of them chewed and tapped pencils, drummed the tops and kicked the legs of their desks, rattled objects in their pockets and pencil cases. Energy was expressed through voice as well as motion, giggling, sometimes screaming, blurting out sounds of mock pain, disgust, satisfaction" (p.9). Junior high school students are constantly experimenting and pushing the limits. Basically stated, Wes believed junior high school students are just "people uncapped" and "what you see is what you get."

Summary

Overall, the teachers concurred that junior high school students are adolescents undergoing confusing physical and mental changes, emotional changes, tensions between independence and dependence, search for identity, and developing interpersonal skills. The experienced elementary and high school teachers felt that junior high school students are different from their elementary or high school counterparts. I think Wes said it best when he stated that junior high school students are "uncapped people full of emotion." Next, the five exemplary junior high school teachers address the triad of knowledge (Collinson, 1996).

The Triad of Knowledge

Collinson (1996) offered a comprehensive portrait of what is important to exemplary teachers and how they envision excellence within and beyond the classroom. This model for becoming an exemplary teacher emphasizes continuous development of the triad of knowledge which includes professional knowledge, interpersonal knowledge, and intrapersonal knowledge. The following reveals the findings which address Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge.

Professional Knowledge

The first facet of the triad of knowledge which was addressed in the study was Professional Knowledge. Collinson (1996) divided professional knowledge into three parts: (1) possesses in-depth knowledge of subject matter and curriculum; (2) possesses strong classroom management techniques; and (3) assists learning, inspires learning, manages energy, and stimulates interest while teaching subject matter.

Possesses in-depth knowledge of subject matter and curriculum.

According to the literature, "The research highlighted numerous times the importance of the teachers' content knowledge. In most of the lessons which were observed exemplary teachers displayed strong knowledge of

their content area, and this enhanced their teaching" (Fraser, Tobin, 1989, P.5). Even though all of the teachers believed professional knowledge was important to being a good teacher, many of them de-emphasized its overall importance. As far as knowledge of subject matter and curriculum, Iris thought that she was quite weak in this area,

> Curriculum is not my strength. My strengths are in how I teach, not what I teach. I'm not saying that I don't have knowledge of what I'm teaching, because I do. But the interpersonal is more important to me than making sure that the curriculum is done from A to B to Z. The curriculum does get done but it's the way that I do it that I find important. I think my philosophy and the way I teach my students are my strengths.

Iris felt that her most important role as a teacher was to foster her students' emotional development. For Iris, teaching subject matter was not a priority

> If they are in grade 8 then they've all passed grade 7, therefore they are all learning grade 8 material in whatever subject. But where they are in their experiences, in their emotions, in their growing, in their maturity, in their wants and needs, and in their independence are all different. This is what I worry about the most.

Iris believed that without the right personal qualities, a teacher would be ineffective despite the immense amount of subject matter he or she may have,

> I think, first of all, you have to be a certain personality to be a teacher, period. We can learn the same kind of math and the same of English and do really well at it, but to share that with other people one must have certain qualities to get that across; and not just curriculum wise but life wise, story wise, experience wise, and background wise.

Thus, Iris believed knowledge of subject matter and curriculum is important, but she felt that knowledge of subject matter and curriculum was insignificant compared with the importance of the teacher's personality and amount of caring.

Sara felt that one must know his or her curriculum, but when asked which of the triad of knowledge was the least important, she believed that subject matter was the easiest to learn and least important in the triad of knowledge,

> I mean, to be honest with you, anybody can teach content. I think subject matter is last, but not because I think it's least important. I think it's important, but it is something that one can learn easily. You can learn your subject from a book or you can learn it from working with and watching other people.

When Debbie was initially asked about the importance of subject matter she felt that "a good teacher is someone who knows his or her subject matter" and " it is important to know one's subject." But later in the interview, after she had time to think about the question more thoroughly, she qualified her initial answer with this statement,

> People and caring are the most important aspects in junior high. I think subject matter, while one should have a command of it, definitely is not the be all end all to being a great teacher, especially when it comes to junior high.

Greg did not mention much about knowledge of subject matter and curriculum in his interview, but he did comment briefly about its lack of importance.

> The lesson is not paramount. New teachers come in from university saying the lesson is this and the lesson is that. Well, you can't teach a lesson until you have someone to teach it to. If you don't have someone to teach it to, you've got to get 'em. So, I believe that when it comes to knowing your subject, it is not important because you've got to get 'em before you can teach 'em. I'm not saying it isn't important, it is just less important.

Wes was probably the greatest advocate of the importance of knowledge of subject and curriculum,

> Yeah, you need curriculum. I happened to be privileged in that I've done a lot of curriculum development work in the area. I've taught in for 30 years as a consultant, as a teacher, as a writer, and now again as a teacher.

Wes felt that one should be "proficient" in his subject matter, but he like Debbie, qualified his original statement later in the interview.

> No curriculum is not important at all, but I think you should have it. I've seen PhD's and I've seen Master's students come in and try to work with kids and they don't last. I was asked from a university by a physics professor who had this master student who was an absolutely terrific master student . This master student wanted to go into education so he wanted to see what it was like. He came and spent a couple of days with me and he walked away saying I don't think I could do that. He left saying "Wes is a psychologist, he's not a teacher." He also added, "God I don't know whether I could do that because I'm so pure physics oriented."

Therefore, the overall message from the interviews was that knowledge of subject matter and curriculum is indeed important, but of all

the attributes one needs to be a great teacher, it is probably the least important.

Possesses strong classroom management techniques. Debbie expressed that it is very important to be a good classroom manager, "you have to be a solid classroom manager otherwise the students will never be in their desks and they will eat you alive." She further added,

> And to have classroom management means just to be aware. It doesn't mean you are the boss. You're controlling things, you're managing things, but you're not running the show all the time.

Debbie also felt that she was good at handling the constant fast pace and transition of junior high school, mostly because she is such an effective time manager.

Greg felt that classroom management is very important. He felt that the one sure way to lose power in one's classroom is to have someone else do your discipline.

> I believe too, that as far as discipline is concerned, you should never, unless it's violence or something like that, have someone else do your discipline. It is a bad scene if you do, you lose power every time you do it. So, you establish your individual power by handling your own discipline, then they know that even if you fail, that you are the one. But the minute they figure you are not the one, you're gone.

Greg also added that the day he could no longer control his classroom is when he would definitely get out of teaching.

As far as the management of his actual classroom he admitted,

> Yeah there are some weaknesses I've just accepted and one of them is I'm basically a disorganized person which is O.K. And because of that I almost over organize and I get disorganized because of over organizing, but yeah that's my weakness, there's no doubt about it.

So, Greg has excellent management of his students, but as he said, his organizational management of his classroom and his work habits are less than to be desired.

Wes said that he just doesn't have classroom management problems, so he felt he must be good in that area. He gave his run-down on how he prepared his students for the year and shared his classroom discipline plan.

> I have, if we were doing this in my classroom you would see, along one side of my wall, 14 things that we do to get along with each other. It's called the code of conduct in a classroom. Students have put it up over the years. I think the basic philosophy is know the rules, know how we can help each other, know what we do, and go from there. My philosophy is quite simple, you try to do what we do in here, try to give it a good shot, and that's easy enough. Don't do it and I'll nail you. I expect a good job from most people who are in the room who can do it and as well I expect respect. That's all laid down at the beginning of a year. There's a booklet that I give the kids and it's called 'Welcome To Wes's Classroom.' There's a hidden subtitle that the kids have become to know over years. It's not printed but it's 'A Guide to the Care and Feeding of an Aging Science Teacher'. They have this and they know what my rules and expectations are, and for the most part I can pull it off. I tend to try to not expect the discipline problems because if you expect them that is when they come. So I have very few discipline problems.

Therefore, Wes believed strong classroom discipline was very important and when done effectively, becomes almost an inherent part of the classroom atmosphere.

Overall, classroom management was emphasized by the teachers as being very important. They did, however, stress management of the students over management of actual classroom affairs and activities.

Assists learning, inspires learning, manages energy, and stimulates interest while teaching subject matter. According to Collinson (1996) an exemplary teacher "Uses strategies to assist students to learning with understanding and gets students involved in classroom discussions, possesses strong classroom management techniques" (p.2). Sara felt that one of her strengths, and the strength of exemplary teachers, is her ability to motivate students, especially junior high school students.

> I think you have to be a good motivator because there's not many junior high kids who are self motivated. I think motivation is important to the success of one's students. Again, especially at this level because future levels there's extrinsic incentives. For example, in high school, some students are going on to the post-secondary level.

Debbie also stressed that being able to motivate students is definitely a skill that all junior high school teachers especially need. She felt that she was an excellent motivator and does as much as she possibly can to make her classroom a fun and enjoyable place to learn.

> It sounds so stupid and so corny but I'm trying to add to their positive memory banks, and that's one of the things that I've stressed throughout all my years. I want them to go, 'ohhh remember when in junior high when we did this, or remember this silly thing that happened.' In that sense I'm a good teacher because I do have fun with them and play with them and they do like to be with me too. It's not just language arts. Sometimes when we are correcting something we sing it out or do something really stupid. If someone else walked in they would be thinking, 'ahh is she ever stupid,' but you know, the kids really like it. They like that part, so I think as far as exemplary teaching goes, I'm a good people person for them. I give them fun experiences in the classroom while we are covering the required material. And you know what, they respond to it.

Debbie also stated that,

> I want learning to start with me and I want them to learn the people skills that they need get along in life and the courtesies that they need. I want my class to have an atmosphere where learning is something they are turned on to in my class, it's not something they have to do in my class

Accordingly, Debbie felt that a classroom in which students want to learn is the best situation of all, but it is up to the teacher to inspire that learning.

And Debbie, like the other teachers interviewed, felt that inspiring learning and stimulating interest in the classroom is a very important part of a teacher's job.

Summary

Overall, the exemplary junior high school teachers in the study felt that professional knowledge was a significant aspect of teaching. They all felt that knowledge of the subject matter and the curriculum is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Classroom management was deemed as quite important by the participants, but chiefly in reference to management of the students. As far as inspiring learning and stimulating interest, this was viewed by the participants as vital to any teacher who wants to be exemplary. Thus, professional knowledge was seen as being one aspect of exemplary junior high school teaching. The next aspect addressed in the deductive analysis of the triad of knowledge is interpersonal knowledge.

Interpersonal Knowledge

The second of the three types of knowledge found in Collinson's (1996) triad is interpersonal knowledge. Steer (1984) suggests that a teacher possessing interpersonal knowledge is as a teacher who:

> interacts constructively with other adults and with adolescents; shows regard for persons; is approachable, responsive, and supportive; promotes positive relationships between the school and the community, between the teacher and the parents and between various sub-cultures of the school; and have skills of working in cooperative teaching situations--with other teachers, paraprofessionals, and resource persons. (p.4)

Collinson (1996) divided interpersonal knowledge into the following three areas: (1) fosters students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth; (2) has successful relationships with students, parents, and local community; and (3) works cooperatively with colleagues. The five exemplary junior high school teachers interviewed had rather consistent assessments of the importance of interpersonal knowledge.

Fosters students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth. Iris felt that fostering student growth was the most important aspect of her job. Iris believed that she is a "model for her students" so she is very careful to always be sending the correct messages. Her motto in the classroom, which she believes fosters student growth, is "Smile and they will smile back at you. Greet them and they will greet you right back. Belong to them and they will belong to you."

Iris explained how she fosters student growth,

> I think the number one commitment one must have is to keep up with his or her students, keep liking the students, and keep understanding the students. You need to keep that good energy to keep them feeling good about themselves because they want to belong, they want to be part of the classroom, and they want you to like them. They want people to like them, and as soon as they sense that maybe somebody doesn't like them somewhere along the way, that affects their whole intake of what they're learning. So I think that's the key, you have to like junior high kids for them to like you. They can sense it. They know, I don't know exactly how, E.S.P. or something because they can just feel it. They just know and you can feel it too. You can feel it coming back to you when they are

> really enjoying you and appreciating you, and definitely you can feel it when they are upset with you too.

Therefore, Iris fosters students' growth by providing the students with a warm learning environment where they know they are liked and cared about. Iris believed that once the students feel safe, they can learn and develop.

Iris also felt that the students modeling her behavior was important when it came to fostering their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth,

> If I want my students to learn things, and just not curriculum and subject matter, they'll have to learn it from me. I have to model in good ways if I want them to go into the world well equipped. I have hundreds of students out in the world modeling me, which is pretty special because it makes me feel good. I know they are modeling me because I tell them stories about when I was in junior high and the kind of things we did, how we felt, how other students around me felt, how I even felt about some teachers, and how some teachers felt about me, and they really like that because that's the stage where they are at.

Sara felt very much the same way Iris did about modeling as the best way to foster student growth, "values they see you model in the classroom help the students develop their own set of values. They see that my actions follow my words." Therefore as a teacher, one must lead by example if he or she expects to foster student growth.

Debbie asserted throughout the interview how fostering student growth was her main priority.

> I'm a good people person for them. I give them good experiences. I try to teach them all those little mother things, like manners and many other things, while I'm doing the curriculum. And you know what, they respond to it. I'm working with them to give them skills for the future. They need to realize that there are consequences for their behavior and they learn these consequences in my classroom.

Debbie always stressed that she sees herself as a mother to all of her students, so student growth is what her philosophy is all about,

> I think that being their mother is what makes me exemplary. You really have to be their mom. You have to be someone who cares about them and who wipes their tears and hugs them when their boyfriend dumps them or when their mom is mad at them in the morning. You have to love them and they have to know that you love them.

Debbie also believed that in order to foster learning in her classroom, the students must want to be there,

> I want kids to be in my class learning as many skills as possible because that's why they're here. But I also want them to want to have fun learning. I want the learning to start with me and I want them to learn the people skills and social skills that they will need get along in life. I want the students to be in a situation where learning is something that they are turned on to in my class.

Thus, fostering students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth was important to the participants in this study. The exemplary junior high school teachers I interviewed felt that fostering student growth was basically the essence of their job. As one university student commented after watching Wes teach, "Mr. ____'s not a teacher, he's a psychologist."

Successful relationships with students, parents, and local community. Collinson (1996) stated that "Not only do exemplary teachers interact with the educational community, they rely on interpersonal knowledge for successful relationships with students and the local community, particularly with the parents or guardians of their students" (p.4). Iris is definitely a "people person." She loves being around people all the time and they enjoy being around her. Besides being with the students, her favorite part of teaching is parent-teacher interviews,

> One great thing I love about this job is parent-teacher interviews. The parents usually don't talk about the report card, they talk about the student. We talk about how well they are doing or how we can help this student feel better about himself or herself. Interviews encourage the parents so that they can continue on, and also I like to support the parents a lot because the hardest most stressful job is being a parent. They deal with their kids all the time. They need to be given support that they are doing all the right things even though they are feeling like they're not and they feel that their child is against them.

Sara's mission statement reflected her relationships with the students, parents and local community,

> All my classrooms are student centered. They are built on mutual trust and mutual respect, and I really go by the philosophy 'you treat me the way you want to be treated, and if we can be open and honest and it will be a good year and a good class.' I really am a strong believer in involving the school, community and parents because open communication between all three is very important.

Debbie was adamant about the importance of successful relationships with her students,

> If you can't connect with the kids, no matter how strong you are in your subject area, you won't be successful as a teacher, especially in junior high. I think that goes for the all areas but junior high they are going to eat you up if you can't connect with them. If you can't establish a rapport and develop some sort of relationship with them you will not be successful in the classroom. They have to care about you. I know a lot of teachers who say, 'ahhh it doesn't matter, you know I have enough friends,' but they have to care about you in order to work for you.

Greg mirrored Debbie's statement, "if you can't get to the kid, learning is not going to happen. You have to get through to the interpersonal level before you, as a teacher, can have an effect on the student."

When I asked Wes what he believed an exemplary junior high school teacher was, he replied "the teacher I can never get in to see or talk to because he is always surrounded by students due to the fact that they just love him and love working with him." He then related the question to himself and answered,

> I think it's one who really can work with the kids, and I think that's the characteristic or skill I'm blessed with. I can be with kids and they will let me be with them. They will still share their life with me and allow me to do the same with them and I think that's a pretty exemplary thing; to be able to have that is a pretty neat privilege. You get to know that kind of stuff just by the way they react to you. I think if you have a good relationship with the kids that's what counts.

The five exemplary junior high school teachers interviewed all felt that relationships with people is what this job is all about. Teaching is definitely a people orientated career, and if as a teacher, one does not have successful relationships with the people around him or her, one cannot be a successful, let alone, an exemplary teacher.

Works cooperatively with colleagues. Collinson (1996) that "Exemplary teachers have developed high levels of interpersonal knowledge necessary for working well with other adults (e.g., open-mindedness, empathy, and honest communication)" (p.6). Sara stressed the importance of building relationships with the people she worked with " I believe it is important to invest the time in colleagues because they are a great source of help and support. And the time that you invest you get back so much." She also stated that "you are as only as good as the people around you."

Wes was a huge believer in teamwork and working with colleagues. When asked why, he said "Because I like people. I like to work with people and I like to be around them, which is one of the problems I'm facing when trying to decide if I should retire or not." He also went into detail about his experiences with some of the people he has worked with.

> Yeah, we coach each other. One of my colleagues, who is now retired, and I were two old farts who had been teaching 30 years and at that point we decided we'd do some effective teaching skills with

> each other. I'd share a skill with him then he'd do it. I'd see how it went off and see if I was able to get it across to him. He'd do the same with me, and then he would see if I could do it. One of the best roads to really good teaching is sharing your skills and be prepared to share with others. I've always been a type of person where people can walk into my curriculum books and take stuff. So I think the whole idea is sharing. I now go to a person who's been teaching eight years with me and I say, 'God how am I going to work this out, what are we going to do,' and we sit down and we hammer it out. I think the big thing is you've got be prepared to trust the people you are working with. You have to trust that what they say is in your best interests and you have to be prepared to listen to them.

Therefore relationships with colleagues are very important because the combination of support, help, resources, and teamwork, results in more effective teaching.

Summary

Overall, the exemplary junior high school teachers in my study felt that interpersonal knowledge was very important to being an exemplary junior high school teacher. Successful relationships with students and fostering student growth were stressed the most within this type of knowledge. The third aspect of the triad of knowledge addressed by the five exemplary junior high school teachers is intrapersonal knowledge (Collinson, 1996).

Intrapersonal Knowledge

The final type of knowledge found in Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge is intrapersonal knowledge. Collinson (1996) defined intrapersonal knowledge as "individual ways of thinking and ways of being, this form of knowledge appears to be the least studied in the triad of knowledge" (p. 6). Collinson (1996) divided intrapersonal into four parts: (1) has disposition towards continuous learning and constant renewal; (2) possesses refined use of reflection; (3) possesses the ethic of care; and (4) possesses the development of work ethic. The following are the findings from the study related to intrapersonal knowledge.

Has a disposition towards continuous learning and constant renewal.

According to Collinson (1996), "A disposition towards continuous learning includes: curiosity; creativity; risk taking; problem finding and solving; responsibility; and flexibility" (p.7). Sara believed that she would not teach anymore if she felt "the love of learning was gone." She felt that one important aspect of her being exemplary is the constant learning from her students,

> When I'm teaching I'm learning because they are teaching me. So it's not like I'm standing up there giving them all this knowledge and wisdom, but they teach me a lot too. So, I think it's a process of always learning from my students while I'm teaching and I really believe that.

Sara believed that one must be continually improving his or her teaching skills as well as learning from his or her mistakes. She believed that one should keep working on his or her strengths, but do not refuse to get help in the areas which you, as a teacher, feel are lacking.

Debbie revealed that she is constantly reading books and attending seminars on teacher effectiveness and parent effectiveness. She believed that once she ceases learning how to improve she will no longer be a good teacher.

Greg explained that constant learning is only possible if one is listening to what people around you have to offer,

> You have to be willing to listen. Maybe the biggest thing is having a pair of ears on your head and stop using your mouth all the time as most teachers do. You have to listen and keep quiet. Listening is probably the best skill one could have as a teacher. Most teachers, teach, teach, teach, without listening. Without listening how can you learn anything?

Wes also addressed how it is important to let his students provide him with continuous learning,

> And the odd time I've said something and I've had kids tell me that I've slipped. I've had kids tell me they don't like what I did very much. I'm quite willing to sit and listen to that. I've never felt undermined by anybody trying to help me, kids included. And I think some teachers feel 'I'm a teacher and you can't tell me,' and I think that's part of the catch.

Wes said that a principal or any other administrator cannot be responsible for making teachers better, but unfortunately sometimes that is the job they are given. Improvement and renewal must come from within that teacher if he or she will ever become better.

Wes gave some examples of ways he has improved his teaching,

> I've followed many models of learning and I subscribe to certain models of learning in my teaching, but that's just part of what I do. I spend a lot of time reading. The research that I've done in my graduate work with university professors at the Faculty of Education in Research and Learning with them in my classroom and me in theirs. I am willing to do that. I feel that's part of the growth.

As well, Wes often seeks strategies and learning tools from other teachers to improve his teaching.

All of the teachers interviewed were very confident and knowledgeable about what they were doing in their classrooms, yet all of them were not content with their current knowledge and were continually seeking more. When I asked Greg why he does not retire from teaching he replied, "why, I'm finally starting to figure this teaching stuff out!" Therefore, continuous learning and constant renewal were highly prevalent among the five exemplary junior high school teachers.

Possesses refined use of reflection. Collinson (1996) stated in the literature that "Exemplary teachers have also developed a disposition of thinking toward the future and the disposition toward optimism as well as

their capacity for habitual and deliberate reflection" (p.8). Reflection was prominent amongst the exemplary junior high school teachers interviewed for this study. Iris commented about her use of reflection throughout the entire interview, especially when it came to handling problem students or times in her classroom when things didn't go so well. She would often make a comment like " after I did _____, I would reflect on it." But Iris also made a comment which I thought was interesting when she said "on the refection end of it, I don't like to do it as much as I used to because that has almost killed me as a teacher too." So, Iris has also learned that there is a fine line between reflection and too much reflection. She simply felt that one cannot beat everything to death and one just has to accept certain things and just move on.

Sara keeps a reflective journal which she writes in every night,

> And I really believe that always reflecting has made me better as a teacher. I keep a reflective journal which includes an array of things about my teaching experiences which I find very helpful. Many times I go back to see why I felt this way and why did I feel that way, because I learn from it.

Greg addressed reflection often throughout his interview as well,

> Reflection is done through constant experimentation, constant self evaluation, and constant individual research into the effectiveness of how you are doing. Things like where you are standing, how you start your lessons, how you speak to people, or how you look at them has to be thought about. Everything has to be evaluated and one has to be conscious that he or she is evaluating on a day to day basis. Then you start to get better, and if you don't improve I believe it is because you're not reflecting effectively.

Greg revealed that he has spent his lifetime inspecting and reflecting on just about everything he does.

Therefore, reflection was a very common tool used by all five of the exemplary junior high school teachers in my study. Most of them felt that they would never be the teachers they are without the constant reflection.

Possesses the ethic of care. Collinson (1996) contends that a teacher with an ethic of care is someone who is caring, compassionate, and giving (p.7). I was not surprised to find that the ethic of care was extremely prominent amongst the five individual exemplary junior high school teachers I interviewed. Iris felt that out of all the qualities she has an exemplary junior high school teacher, her ethic of care is the strongest. She was a very feeling and passionate person, so caring for her students was very important to her.

Sara also said that if anyone asked her students what quality they liked about her the most they would say " she cares about us." Sara reinforced this by saying "I have high energy, a lot of enthusiasm, and enthusiasm for learning. I love to learn. I guess even beyond that though is caring. My students know that no matter what they do, that when they are here they are cared about."

Debbie also cared greatly for her students,

> You really have to be their mom. You have to be someone who cares about them and wipes their tears and hugs them when their boyfriend dumps them or when their mom is mad at them in the morning. You have to love them and they have to know that you love them.

Debbie went on and on about how she cares for her students, but to sum it all up, she felt that caring was for her the most important aspect of her job.

As far as Wes was concerned, he believed that caring was the most important part of teaching as well. He also said to me that people should get out of teaching immediately when the care for the kids is gone. Greg also concurred with Wes. He felt that his care for his students was above all the most important to him.

Thus, in the intrapersonal knowledge, the ethic of care was the most prevalent throughout the interviews. The ethic of care seemed to be the foundation for being an exemplary junior high school teacher. All of the teachers concurred that an ethic of care was the most important quality a teacher should possess.

Possesses a development of work ethic. In the literature, Collinson (1996) stated that a work ethic included pride of effort, dedication, and doing ones best (p. 7). This was a common theme in all the interviews as well. Iris, Sara, Debbie, Greg, and Wes all had amazing work ethics. Each of them spent an immense amount of time at their schools, at home

working on schoolwork, and attending and running extra-curricular activities.

This was not a theme that any of them really stressed as a reason why they were exemplary because most felt it was just part of the job and they enjoyed it. This just showed me that the teachers in my study loved teaching so much that none of them considered his job "work."

Therefore, the presence of a work ethic was obvious among the five exemplary junior high school teachers. The hours the teachers put in every day were spent not only on marking and preparing for their classes, but on the other aspects of the intrapersonal knowledge as well like caring, learning, and reflection.

Thus, the five exemplary junior high school teachers felt that intrapersonal knowledge was the most important of the three types of knowledge. All of the exemplary teachers interviewed felt that the ethic of care was very important to them. Constant renewal and learning were also quite common within the group. Reflection was also utilized greatly among all five teachers. As well, the work ethic of all five teachers was strong.

Summary

Therefore, the exemplary junior high school teachers in my study all possessed the triad of knowledge in varying degrees. The five exemplary junior high school teachers were the strongest in the intrapersonal

knowledge aspect of the triad of knowledge mainly because of the importance of reflection and an ethic of care. The interpersonal knowledge dimension was also quite prominent among the teachers due to teaching being such a relationship based profession. Professional knowledge, although seen as significant, was not stressed by the exemplary junior high school teachers because knowledge of curriculum was not viewed as highly important in the large scheme of teaching. Following is the inductive analysis of the data.

Inductive Analysis

The following are the inductive themes which emerged from the data. Firstly, the exemplary junior high school teachers exhibited similar qualities of character. These character qualities include shared behaviors and personality traits. The philosophies of the teachers, or how they viewed teaching and junior high school students, were also similar. Another commonality was the "Insightiousness" of the five exemplary junior high school teachers. "Insightiousness" is a deep understanding and appreciation for their students. "Adultolescence" was another common trait. By "Adultolescence" I mean the five exemplary junior high school teachers possessed many qualities and characteristics which one also finds primarily in junior high school students. The teachers also exhibited a similar

personae. Their personae, or overall being and demeanor, gave them all a strong presence in the classroom.

Character Qualities

The individual characteristics which are incorporated in this theme include care, exuberance, reflection, self-knowledge, humor, humility, and pride. Care and reflection have already been addressed in the deductive analysis of intrapersonal knowledge. But the following important findings emerged from the data. The separate entities which make up the character qualities category are exuberance, self-knowledge, humor, humility, and pride.

Exuberance

A common personality characteristic exhibited by all five exemplary teachers was that they were very positive, full of energy and enthusiasm, and thrived on challenges.

As Iris stated, "you need to have good energy to keep the students feeling good about themselves and to keep them wanting to be in your classroom learning." Her motto even emitted positiveness, "Smile and they will smile back at you. Greet them and they will greet you right back. Belong to them and they will belong to you." Therefore, positiveness and energy were very evident in Iris's classroom.

Sara also stressed being positive with her students, "my goal is to always be the teacher where the students know that we can have fun and it will be positive and not down in our classroom." Sara later added, "I have high energy, a lot of enthusiasm for teaching and learning, and I love to teach and learn. I thrive on challenges and I get just as pumped up as the students do." Therefore, Sara promotes a positive and energetic classroom for the students to learn in.

Debbie was very adamant about providing a positive work environment for her students,

> My whole purpose of being here and staying in junior high is because I want to make it the best experience for the kids. It sounds so stupid and so corny but I'm here and I'm trying to add to their positive memory banks. I want them to go, 'oooh remember in junior high when we did this, or remember that silly thing that happened.' In that sense I'm a good teacher because I do have fun with them and they do like to be with me and I do play. I don't want it to be just Language Arts, so sometimes when we are correcting something we sing it out or do something really stupid. If someone else walked in they would be thinking, 'ahh is she ever stupid,' but the kids really like it and they respond to it.

Debbie was full of enthusiasm, very positive and wanted to make sure that each of her students was given a positive experience in her classroom.

Greg said one of his favorite aspects of teaching was the inherent challenges which he welcomed with positive open arms, "I think I like it because I never get bored. Every day is a new challenge, new people and recently it's become even more challenging with the demands that are put

on teachers. Rather than complain about it I just enjoy it." He later stated that one thing he despises in education is negative people, "If there's anything I can't stand is complaining or negative people. I just can't stand them because for God's sake do something about it or be quiet. I just don't like it." So positiveness was something that Greg stressed in his classroom and in his life.

Wes also spoke often about loving the challenges of junior high school. He told me of an "inner burning" he had everyday he set foot in his classroom. He also told me that when he did not feel that "inner burning" any more, he would quit teaching. He also stated that it wasn't hard to be positive about teaching because he loved his job so much.

Therefore, being positive, energetic, enthusiastic, and easily challenged were definitely descriptors of the five exemplary junior high school teachers I interviewed for this study. After each interview, I was very inspired and driven to get back into the classroom immediately.

Self-knowledge

Another characteristic which emerged from the data was that every teacher had a strong sense of self, or put another way, they really knew who they were. Sara felt that if you do not know yourself or if you are uncomfortable with who you are, you cannot teach effectively,

> I think you have to be yourself and let who you are be a part of your teaching. Teaching should be extension of yourself. It shouldn't be where you feel out of sorts or uncomfortable to the point you have to put on an act. If you are uncomfortable with yourself then that will show up in your teaching.

Sara added, "I think you have to know yourself and know your strengths and shortcomings before you can share yourself with anybody. You have to be strong and comfortable with who you are first."

Greg concurred with Sara in his interview,

> I think the first thing is that you have to have a good sense of yourself. You have to have confidence in who you are, not be making excuses for what you do, and at the same time, you have to be willing to listen. Maybe the biggest thing is having a pair of ears on your head and stop using your mouth all the time.

Greg continued the above thought by stating "you have to develop a sense of self-confidence. You must go through constant experimentation, constant self- evaluation, and constant individual research into what you do everyday."

When asked when he would give up teaching, Greg said "when I lose my sense of individuality and my emotional stability." So basically, Greg felt that to be an exemplary junior high school teacher, one must have a strong sense of who you are and self-confidence.

Wes also supported Greg's statements in his interview. He felt that to be an exemplary junior high school teacher,

> You have to be really comfortable with yourself in this particular realm. You have to understand who you are, you have to comfortable handling all the students can dish out, and you have be

> comfortable with being told off. I get told off a lot. Oh boy, the number of times I've been told to @#* myself, or called a @$#, you wouldn't believe!

Therefore, a strong sense of self is very important when teaching junior high school students. If one is not comfortable with himself or herself and is not secure with who he or she is, he or she cannot be effective, let alone exemplary, in the classroom.

Humor

The one personality trait that I found very common throughout the five exemplary junior high school teachers was a sense of humor. Iris was a very funny person. If she chose to, she could perform at a stand up comedy club and have the audience rolling in the isles in minutes. All of the teachers were very light hearted and loved to joke around and use humor throughout their interviews. Greg even admitted that if you don't have a sense of humor you could not be a junior high school teacher. He said that one has to see the humor in junior high school students because there is a lot there. Greg felt that if you can't see the humor, you will probably have a nervous breakdown.

Humility

A character quality which was very common among the five exemplary junior high school teachers was their humility. They all knew

that they were fallible human beings who had problems and made mistakes just like everyone else. Also, none of them believed that they were worthy of the title "exemplary junior high school teacher."

Iris stated that she was always making mistakes and "screwing up" but that was just because she was a human being, "I make mistakes in the classroom and the students tell me. I apologize and ask the students to forgive me and then we move on." Iris also felt that she was not worthy of the title "exemplary junior high school teacher" because she was believed her teaching was far from excellent, "sometimes at the end of the day I feel like I've just lived a horrible nightmare because I've had a couple of run-ins with students or I have hurt a student's feelings." Iris expressed that sometimes the bad days were good though, because it helped her appreciate the good ones so much more.

Sara was very surprised that she was nominated as an exemplary junior high school teacher because she felt the nomination was not really warranted. She de-emphasized it by saying that "you are only as good as the people you work with, so that is why some might consider me good." She also stated that she has many shortcomings and she is always trying to strengthen them. Sara said that with the help of her students, colleagues, and parents, she will be able to improve as long as she is open minded and listens. So, Sara felt that she is just another teacher who has a lot to learn

and will continue to do so as long as the people around her offer her suggestions.

Debbie was a very humble person. She refused to accept that she is viewed as an exemplary junior high school teacher, "I wouldn't classify myself as exemplary but I do consider myself as a very caring teacher." She felt that she was a good example of an average junior high school teacher. When I first asked Debbie the question: What suggestions would you give a teacher who wants to be exemplary? she answered "I am not qualified to answer that question." Therefore Debbie never believed she was worthy of the "exemplary" title, but she did accept that she was a very caring and giving teacher.

Greg also did not see himself as exemplary, he felt he was an effective teacher who put in a lot of hours. He also said that his biggest strength was that he was always willing to listen and that no amount of advice was too small. He was very open minded and did not consider himself to be too good to listen to suggestions for improvement. Greg humbly stated, " it took me 30 years to finally figure out what I am doing, I don't want to quit now!"

Wes was definitely a humble person. I laughed when he said "I get told off by my students a lot. Oh boy, the number of times I've been told to #*@ myself or called a @#* you wouldn't believe!" When I told Wes that he was nominated as an exemplary junior high school teacher he said he

was embarrassed and that he was no better than many of the teachers he teaches with. Wes also stated that he realized he is far from perfect and that he tries his best to improve his imperfections or just learns to accept them.

Therefore, humility was a common character quality among the five junior high school teachers in this study. None of the five exemplary junior high school teachers in this study felt that he was exemplary or that she was too good for improvement.

Pride

The five exemplary junior high school teachers, even though humble, also had a great sense of pride that they taught junior high school. They all realized the stigma that was associated with junior high school and knew that many people envied and respected them for being able to teach and "put up with" junior high school students.

Iris said she was proud to be a junior high school teacher. Iris felt pride because her students were out in the world modeling her. She also stressed how easy teaching junior high school was for her "the workload, marking papers, report cards, parent teacher interviews, teaching the students... all sweatless for me." Iris stressed that she loved her job and that she was very lucky to be junior high school teacher.

Sara knew that being able to teach junior high school was not for everyone... just for the ones who could handle it. "You either love to be

with junior high school students or you don't. You have to thrive on challenges and be pumped up to teach junior high school students. It is definitely not for everyone." Sara also said that "you have to be a strong person to be a teacher, but especially to be a junior high school teacher." So, it was evident that Sara felt a sense of pride that she had all of the characteristics mentioned above which enabled her to teach junior high school.

Even though Debbie felt that she was just an average junior high school teacher, she did have a sense of pride in being able to teach junior high school students. Debbie stated that "teachers at the junior high school level must have a sense of humor or they will not survive. Teachers have to be able to connect with the students at the junior high school level or the students will not learn." Debbie knew that she possessed the previous qualities and she was proud of it. Debbie was also very proud that she was considered "everybody's mom" by the junior high school students. Debbie knew that she could teach junior high school students well, and she also knew that she was good at it, which gave her a sense of pride.

Greg also knew that he was a teacher who could teach junior high school students well, therefore this gave him a sense of pride, "my students appreciate me and they learn from me so I consider myself effective." He also expressed that "I really enjoy the kids as well as the challenges inherent in working with them. Many people complain about this age

group, but rather than complain I just enjoy it." Therefore, Greg saw teaching junior high school as something he could do well that maybe others couldn't, so he was proud of that.

Wes expressed his pride by the statement "I'm one of the few teachers who are just willing to take the junior high school students for what they are and appreciate them." Wes felt that he had the gift of being one of the few who could work well with junior high school students. He was also proud that he was "blessed with the ability to be with kids and them wanting to be with him." Therefore, Wes was proud to be a junior high school teacher because he "had what it takes" and he felt that this put him in a certain class of teachers.

Therefore, the five exemplary junior high school teachers in this study felt a great sense of pride teaching junior high school. They felt that they were accomplishing something that many thought was remarkable. Each teacher felt that being a successful teaching junior high school was a source of satisfaction and pride that was her own.

Summary

The character qualities theme included the qualities of care, exuberance, reflection, self-knowledge, humility, and pride. These were character qualities which the five junior high school teachers possessed which contributed towards their exemplary teaching. These characteristics

were very important because so much of how the teacher "comes across" in the classroom and is able to teach the students in the classroom depends on his or her personal qualities and characteristics. The next aspect in the inductive analysis is philosophy.

Philosophy

This theme refers to the teaching philosophy of the exemplary junior high school teacher. The categories which make up the philosophy theme are perseverance, comfort, mutual treatment, student centered teaching, student growth, continuous learning, successful relationships, inspirational learning, and holistic teaching. Student centered learning, student growth, and successful relationships have been previously addressed in the deductive analysis of interpersonal knowledge. Inspirational learning was addressed in the professional knowledge aspect of the deductive analysis, and continuous learning in intrapersonal knowledge. The findings which emerged from the data and discussed below are perseverance, comfort, mutual treatment, and being a holistic teacher.

Perseverance

One interesting finding that emerged was the perseverance of the five exemplary junior high school teachers. Perseverance means that one is

able to endure, forgive, and then move on. The attitude that "tomorrow is another day so I will just forgive and move on" was highly prevalent among the five teachers.

Iris expressed the thought in this way,

> That unconditional friendship, that unconditional love kind of thing that even though we have tons of good days, we know where we are at when there's anger or a blow on the bad days. We discuss it, learn from it, and then forgive each other and get on with our lives.

Iris felt that if you are a good teacher you can never give up on a student for any reason. If a teacher gets upset or angry, or if a student gets upset or angry, "that just means each of you care, and what is so wrong with that." She felt that no matter what a student does in her class, she will never "write that student off" because " we are all going somewhere and as teachers we have to have faith that each student will make the best decision."

Iris added later in the interview,

> We have to allow junior high students to say they're sorry because they will apologize. We have to accept that apology and forgive them. I also think there is a lot of things that I do, as a junior high teacher, that upsets them. So I apologize and ask them for forgiveness, otherwise the relationship can't go on. There's got to be that connection there, where you and your students are able to stay as a family and feel that everyone belongs and no one will give up.

All the teachers shared the common feeling that "giving up is never an option." The junior high school years are very emotional for many adolescents, and as a junior high school teacher one must accept this and be

able to persevere through all of the emotions and look deeper into the students. As Wes put it bluntly, "@#* you doesn't mean @#* you." What he meant by this was that, as a junior high school teacher, one must look beneath the surface and find out what the student is feeling and try to help him or her without getting upset and giving up on the student.

Therefore, perseverance was a significant characteristic among the five exemplary junior high school teachers. Wes summed it up best by his statement "you've got to be prepared to take everything they can dish out, handle it the best you can and then move on, and whatever you do, don't dwell on it."

Comfort

Comfort is another finding which emerged from the interviews of the five exemplary junior high school teachers. The teachers strove to make their classrooms a safe haven for the students where they could feel safe, secure, and happy while learning. Iris wanted her room to have an atmosphere where everyone felt like part of a family,

> There's got to be that connection where they are able to feel like a family and feel that they belong. That unconditional friendship, that unconditional love kind of thing that even though we have tons of good days and some bad days, we'll discuss it, learn from it, forgive each other, and then move on.

Iris reinforced this later on in the interview,

> If you can share things on a comfortable ground, you will always have a successful day. This classroom, this is my second home, here, right here. It's their second home too until we leave at quarter to three. So when I come into this classroom with my students, we are at home. This is our space so we have to feel like we belong here. We have to feel comfortable here and must be accepting of each other in my classroom or we won't get anywhere. I like my classroom to be welcoming and I like the students to feel that they belong.

Sara felt that her classroom was a place where the students knew they could feel safe, "they know that no matter what they do when they are here they are cared about. They know I'll be their protector and go to bat for them." It was important to Sara that the students knew that they could feel safe and secure in her classroom.

Debbie, Greg, and Wes also noted that they always want their classrooms to be a safe, warm, comfortable place for the students. They all felt that unless the students felt safe in their classrooms, proper learning could not take place.

Therefore, providing a safe, secure, warm, and happy environment for the students was a priority for the five exemplary junior high school teachers in this study.

Mutual Treatment and Respect

Another common finding which emerged from the data, which the teachers expressed often, was their acceptance of the importance of mutual treatment and respect. As Iris stated "If you have respect for them, they

will have respect for you. You will have certain expectations for them and they will have certain expectations for you. They will give back what you give them." Iris knew the students mirrored her, so what she gave to her students she would receive back.

Sara stressed that "my classroom is student centered, built on mutual trust, mutual honesty, and mutual respect." She was also of the belief that she will always treat her students in the way which she would want to be treated. So, again, if Sara felt that if she treated her students with respect, honesty, and trust, she should receive them in return.

When Wes was asked what it was that made some teachers ineffective, he replied that "they don't respect their students, and that is why the students do not respect them back." Greg and Debbie also expressed that mutual respect and the golden rule were important in their classrooms as well.

Therefore, mutual respect and mutual treatment of their students was common among the five exemplary junior high school teachers. They believed that the only way to receive the treatment they wanted from their students was to give it.

Holistic Teaching

The teachers believed that to be exemplary, teaching becomes a way of life, or as Sara put it, "my whole being is a teacher." All of the teachers

lived and breathed teaching. Teaching was such a part of them it was who they were. Wes expressed this in his statement "I mean, day by day, teaching is a part of you, and it's a part of everything you do, so it just seems like everything you do."

None of the teachers saw this as a nine to five job, they saw teaching as who they are, and they were all proud of that. Therefore, the five exemplary junior high school teachers did not see teaching as a separate entity in their lives, they viewed teaching as their whole being, or "holistic" teaching.

Summary

The five exemplary junior high school teachers shared a common philosophy which included perseverance, comfort, student centered learning, student growth, continuous learning, successful relationships, inspirational learning, mutual treatment, and being a holistic teacher. The teachers' philosophy was just one of the important themes which made them exemplary junior high school teachers. The next aspect that emerged from the data was "Insightiousness."

Insightiousness

"Insightiousness" was a prominent theme among the five exemplary junior high school teachers. I coined the term "insightiousness" because

what the teachers exhibited was much more than insight, it was more of a deep understanding and appreciation for what the students were. The teachers were able to understand and appreciate their students. The teachers were also very knowledgeable about the many facets of a junior high student which was addressed in the deductive analysis under the heading "Junior High School Student." The aspect which was not covered in the deductive analysis, which emerged from the data, was liking, understanding, and appreciating junior high school students.

Like, Be Interested, and Understand

Iris felt that one important quality of a junior high school teacher is that one must enjoy and understand junior high school students. This may seem obvious to some, but it takes a special person to fulfill this requirement. As Iris stated,

> I think the number one commitment one must have as a junior high school student is to keep up with your students, keep liking your students, and keep understanding your students. I really believe that's the key. You have to like junior high kids.

As Iris continued to speak she added,

> You have to accept where they are at. If you can do that, anything can be taught and anything can be learned. When you share all kinds of things like stories, successes and defeats, and all the kinds of emotions junior high school students go through in the day, you begin to understand them. If you can share those on a comfortable ground, you will always have a successful day.

Iris summed up her thoughts by her statement,

> And I think to be a junior high teacher, with all the different growths of all these students who are all coming from different directions and growing at different kinds of levels, you have to be able to understand them. You must accept who they are and at the place where they are.

Sara felt that, "you either love junior high school students or you don't. And I think the secret to loving them is understanding and accepting them."

Debbie expressed very similar feelings to that of Sara and Iris,

> You really have to love working with them and you have to like their silly sense of humor and you have to want to listen to their stories. I hear stories all the time about their toe, their sister or their brother, and you have to be interested and you have to care. I can't be 'oh don't bother me,' that type of thing, because I know people who are like that. They just don't want to take the time and listen. As a junior high school teacher, you really have to be interested in what the kids are saying and feeling.

When I asked Greg why he was a good teacher, he replied, " I love the kids, I never get bored being around them, and everyday with them is a new challenge. That's why I teach junior high school."

Wes believed that to be successful with junior high school students one has to really know who he's working with,

> I think you have to understand what you've got, and I think you have to understand what you are working with. You have to be prepared to take them where they are. You have to be prepared to understand that they are going to do things that may seem crazy. I am quite willing to take the kids for who they are and not always feel I've got all the answers. I use my kids all the time to help me through things that I care not to try and remember like big long facts

> and dates or every little thing on a computer program. I can get them to help me very quickly. I think the exemplary thing or quality you need to have is to understand that, and this sounds crude, but '@#$ you' doesn't mean '@#$ you.' As a matter of fact, part of another speech I use once in awhile is entitled '@#$ You From The Heart!'

Summary

Even though liking, being interested in, and understanding junior high school students may seem an obvious attribute of an exemplary junior high school teacher, it is certainly an important one that should not be overlooked. From a consideration of the previous findings on junior high school students it is evident that junior high school students are unique, so if one is to be an exemplary junior high school teacher one should like, be interested in, and understand the adolescent age group. The next finding which emerged from the data during the inductive analysis is "Adultolescence."

Adultolescence

"Adultolescence" was a common characteristic among the five junior high school teachers. This term was fabricated because I needed a word that described an adult with adolescent qualities. Many qualities and characteristics found in junior high school students were also found in the five exemplary junior high school teachers in this study. Following is a

description of the parallels between the five junior high school teachers interviewed and the junior high school students they teach.

In the initial part of the interview, Iris gave a good example of how she emulates her students,

> I know I haven't grown up yet when I am jealous of my students because I want to have their shoes or their clothes. I sit around with the girls and we talk about movies and stuff and I fit right in with them.

Iris also talked about some other characteristics she has which parallel that of her junior high school students,

> I am very outgoing. I am very much a people person and a feeling person. In junior high school, high school, university, and even now, I didn't study or work as much as I should of because I was too busy socializing and being with people. I like to be included and like to make sure everyone else feels included as well.

Iris still loves to be the "class clown." She loves it because "I get to laugh at my own jokes and everybody else laughs at me too. I like when I get a good response." She said that many of her friends told her that she should perform at comedy clubs. When Iris goes to parties or is in the ringette locker room her friends expect her to entertain them.

Iris also gave an example of getting into a fight with one of her female students last year. Iris and the student had a fight and Iris said that she receded right back to her days of being a junior high school student. Her and the student fought just like two junior high school students would instead of the her being the adult in the argument. Iris admitted that she

still has a little girl inside of her, and sometimes the students can bring that little girl right to the surface. Iris saw the similarities between her and her students' personalities as a strength because it allowed her to relate well with them and understand what they are going through.

Sara was very similar to her junior high school students in many ways. One way was her need to be surrounded and accepted by people, "I like people and I like being around people a lot. I have a lot of friends and I value my friendships more that anything else." After talking with and getting to know Sara, it was evident that she based some of her happiness on the relations she had with her friends.

Also, just like her junior high school students, Sara liked to be "different." Sara stated in the interview, "I like to be different and I like to do different things in the classroom. I like 'being on the edge' and the students really like that." Sara definitely had a mischievous side to her and that allowed her to relate well with the students in the classroom.

Debbie felt that one of her strengths as a junior high school teacher was her connection with them. This connection was due somewhat to the similarities between her and the students. As Debbie stated, " I like to get silly in class, joke around, and sometimes just make a complete fool of myself just to get the students to laugh and loosen up." She stated that she is also very emotional and sensitive just like her students. Debbie believed

that because she is so much like her junior high school students she is better able to be with them and relate to them.

One way Greg admitted he is definitely like his junior high school high students is that he is always evaluating himself, "through constant experimentation, constant self-evaluation, and constant individual research I look at the effectiveness of how I am going about things, how I am standing, how I look, and everything else I do. I am very self-conscious and I am always self-evaluating on a day to day basis." Greg also stressed how important people and relationships are in his life, just like they are to junior high school students.

Wes stated that he definitely is like the students he teaches "I am one who can really work with junior high school kids because in many ways I am just like them. I am blessed with the many characteristics that I have in common with junior high school students. I like to be with them and they like to be with me because we are in so many ways similar."

Wes was a "kid" at heart and that was evident. He loved to wrestle and play-fight with his students often and he loved to sit around and just talk to them. Wes, like his junior high school students, was a people person who loved being surrounded by people.

Summary

The five exemplary junior high school teachers in this study shared many characteristic with the students they taught. Many qualities and characteristics which were revealed earlier in this thesis pertaining to junior high school students are common to many characteristics of the exemplary teachers who teach them. Commonalties include being people centered, undergoing constant evaluation, being mischievous, being rebellious, being the center of attention, being emotional and sensitive, and just being an adolescent at heart. Therefore the five exemplary junior high school teachers paralleled or emulated the junior high school students they taught. The last of the findings which emerged from the data is personae.

Personae

Personae is defined as a person's overall being or essence (inherent nature). Personae was very important to the study of exemplary junior high school teachers because their essence was relevant to their success in the classroom. Aspects of personae were very difficult to identify and describe. Personae included aspects like voice, body language, facial expressions, and overall presence. Together, their characteristics provided insight into the exemplary junior high school teachers' whole being.

The first aspect which contributed to their personae was their voices. The five exemplary junior high school teachers interviewed all had a commonality in their voices. The commonality was not their actual voices but the overall essence. They all had very soothing, calming, and comforting voices. Iris's voice was raspy but it was still soothing. Debbie's soft voice was extremely calm and relaxing which really made me, as a researcher, feel at ease. Greg's calming voice came from a very low voice which had the power to boom. Sara's soft and gentle voice was very comforting. Wes's direct and loud voice was very confident and reassuring. So despite the fact that their voices were all different, they were all laid-back, relaxing, comforting, and reassuring.

Another aspect of their personae which was a commonality among the five exemplary junior high school teachers was their body language. Each teacher exuded enthusiasm by his or her body language. Iris was very restless and had trouble sitting still. As well, she used her hands a lot when talking. Sara also talked with her hands and liked to act out her explanations to the interview questions. Debbie talked with her hands a great deal and was also restless during the interview. Greg was fidgety and was constantly shifting to get comfortable. Wes was forever swaying in his chair or playing with something on the desk and talking with his hands to keep them occupied. One could tell that these teachers had a copious amount of energy which was difficult to harness, hence their restlessness.

The exemplary junior high school teachers were also very open with their bodies. Each of them squared their bodies to me to show that I was their main focus. This allowed me as a researcher to feel that I was important and that they valued my time and presence.

Each of the five exemplary junior high school teachers also had a very warm and friendly face. Each teacher smiled and laughed throughout the interview which was very welcoming and comforting. I walked out of each interview with a sunny disposition because their smiles were so contagious.

It was very difficult to identify what exactly these teachers had that made their dispositions so warm, friendly, and inviting. As soon as I entered the room, I could feel the warmth each teacher emitted. Therefore, each teacher had an overall presence which was friendly, warm, and comforting.

Summary

Each exemplary junior high school teacher had a personae which exuded warmth, friendliness, reassurance, comfort, safety, enthusiasm, and happiness. A combination of their voices, their body language, their facial expressions, and their overall presence allowed them to give off the previously mentioned feelings. Thus, each teacher's personae, even though

difficult to explain and identify, contributed to his or her exemplary teaching.

Chapter Summary

This chapter included the findings of the five interviews with exemplary junior high school teachers. The purpose of the interviews was to find out what makes some junior high school teachers exemplary. A qualitative semi-structured interview was used. From both the deductive approach and the inductive approach many themes were identified.

The deductive themes, which emerged from the review of the literature and my sub-questions, were: (1) what the phrase "exemplary junior high school teacher" meant to each of them; (2) the junior high school student; and (3) Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge (professional knowledge, interpersonal knowledge, and intrapersonal knowledge). The inductive themes which emerged from the data were character qualities, philosophy, insightiousness, adultolescence, and personae.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Reflections

Chapter Introduction

The concluding chapter of this thesis contains three major sections. The first section is an overview of the purpose of the study, a review of the research design, and an overview of the study including the significance of the major findings. The second section consists of recommendations for practice and theory as well as implications for future research. The final section focuses on the personal reflections of the researcher with regard to the research.

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to aggregate findings from teachers' answers to the question: What makes some junior high school teachers exemplary?

A number of more specific questions were proposed to serve as guides to the development of the study and to the analysis of the data. These questions, as they evolved through the process of the study, are as follows:

1. What is an "exemplary junior high school teacher?"

2. What are the perceived unique characteristics of junior high school students?

3. Do exemplary junior high school teachers possess the triad of knowledge.

4. How do exemplary junior high school teachers perceive the importance of the three components of the triad of knowledge.

5. What do exemplary junior high school teachers possess which are beyond Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge?

Research Design

The research methodology for this study was designed to attain an understanding of what makes some junior high school teachers exemplary.

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview format to allow for the inclusion of unforeseen areas of relevancy to the study. The use of informal, open ended questioning allowed the respondents freedom to exceed the limitations imposed by the questions, revealing information new to the researcher.

The interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. Copies of their transcripts were provided to each respondent to allow the teachers to check their remarks for clarity of content and intent. Further contact was made with the teachers to discuss any changes or deletions made to the data.

Initial categories were derived from literature previously read and from first readings of the interview transcripts (deductive analysis). A suitable framework for the organization of the categories was provided through the use of the study's guideline questions. During the process of inductive data analysis, further themes relevant to the study emerged.

Summary and Significance of the Findings

The five exemplary junior high school teacher participants in this study provided valuable descriptive responses which helped to suggest answers to the five sub-questions of this study.

The first sub-question: **What is an "exemplary junior high school teacher?"** was partially answered in the following theme. The entire study actually addresses this sub-question better and in greater detail, but the following are the actual responses the teachers gave when initially asked the question.

Exemplary junior high school teacher. After asking the question "what does the phrase 'exemplary junior high school teacher' mean to

you", I was given responses which I felt were overly simplistic. Iris and Sara felt that an exemplary junior high school teacher is one who is a great role model or example for the junior high school students. Debbie felt that it is someone who cares for and connects with his or her students. Greg felt an exemplary junior high school teacher is one who is effective with the students and puts in long hours. And Wes believed an exemplary junior high school teacher is one who has the gift of being with and 'slogging away with' junior high school students.

It is fortunate I did not base my study on this one question, because if I had, this study would have definitely lacked depth. For instance, while all the respondents were quick to identify what they perceived an exemplary junior high school teacher to be, none of them were willing to label himself or herself as exemplary. They were all very modest and de-emphasized the fact that they were worthy of exemplary status. But, after each interview, full of many probing questions, each teacher eventually gave me a fuller description of an exemplary junior high school teacher and some even admitted that they were indeed exemplary.

Therefore, even though each teacher did not know originally what an exemplary junior high school teacher was, they did have some idea. I believe it was a significant question to ask at the beginning of the interview because it revealed their personalities and their ideologies. Their simplistic and modest answers displayed their common humility and basic views on

the phrase 'exemplary junior high school teacher.' What each said was definitely not wrong, but as they all realized by the end of the interviews, their definitions were very sparse and incomplete.

The next sub-question which was addressed by the five exemplary junior high school teachers was: **What are the perceived unique characteristics of junior high school teachers?**

Junior high school students. The consensus was quite strong that junior high school students are in a "class of their own" because they are much different from their elementary or high school counterparts. The overall commonality in the responses was that they are students who are in the middle of their development. In junior high school, the students' bodies and minds are developing and changing at such a fast and confusing rate that many of the students are confused. They are also people who are in the period of their lives where they really want to fit in and be accepted. As Wes believed, they are basically people "uncapped."

Obviously this theme is important to this study, because without it, the purpose of this study would be meaningless. Because junior high school students are different from elementary or high school students, the manner in which they are taught and treated must also be different. Those who are exemplary in teaching this special group (junior high school students) are worthy of researching. So, as one can see, if junior high school students

were just like all other students in every other school level, it would not be significant to focus on junior high school teachers. Thus, because junior high school students were found to be different from elementary or high school students, an assumption was that junior high school teachers take a different approach to teaching than elementary or high school teachers.

The third sub-question which was addressed by the five exemplary junior high school teachers is: **Do exemplary junior high school teachers possess the triad of knowledge?**

Professional knowledge. The first factor of the triad of knowledge is professional knowledge. Professional knowledge was divided into three categories: (1) in-depth knowledge of subject matter and curriculum; (2) possesses strong classroom management techniques; and (3) assists learning, inspires learning, manages energy, and stimulates interest while teaching subject matter.

With respect to in-depth knowledge and subject matter, the teachers felt that this was important, but also the easiest to master. None of them discarded knowledge of subject matter and curriculum as part of their exemplary status, but they believed that it was not what made them exemplary. Iris even went as far to say that she is relatively weak in this area. This is significant because it illustrates that comprehensive knowledge

of subject matter and curriculum, albeit important, is not perceived by the respondents as vital to being an exemplary junior high school teacher.

Another aspect of professional knowledge is possessing strong classroom management techniques. All the teachers agreed that one must be a solid classroom manager. Greg felt that neglecting classroom management was one sure way to lose power. Wes believed that classroom management was not a separate entity, but part of the overall classroom atmosphere. The importance of this aspect of professional knowledge is that the exemplary junior high school teachers stressed management of the students as important, not the management of any other of the classroom affairs.

Assisting learning, inspiring energy, managing energy, and stimulating interest while teaching subject matter were the final parts of professional knowledge. The overall commonality of this theme was motivation. The teachers felt that one of the roles in their classrooms was to motivate the students towards learning. They all felt that in a junior high school classroom, the teacher must inspire learning because most junior high school students are not self-motivated. Therefore, inspiring energy and stimulating interest are significant aspects to being an exemplary junior high school teacher.

Overall, professional knowledge was seen as a significant aspect to being an exemplary junior high school teacher but was viewed as the least

important in the triad. Motivating and inspiring learning were deemed as the most important, with effective student management second, followed by knowledge of subject matter and curriculum. Knowledge of the subject matter and the curriculum were not viewed as unnecessary, but the teachers felt that in the large scheme of things, it is the easiest to pick up and was never a challenge to them.

Interpersonal knowledge. The second type of knowledge was interpersonal knowledge. Interpersonal knowledge was also divided into three categories: (1) fosters students' intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth; (2) has successful relationships with students, parents, and local community; and (3) works cooperatively with colleagues.

Fostering students' intellectual, social, and physical growth was perceived as an important focus by the exemplary junior high school teachers. Modeling was deemed by the teachers as the most effective way to accomplish the above. The teachers felt that fostering students in every area possible was their purpose as teachers and should be their main priority.

Having successful relationships with students, parents, and the local community was an obvious attribute of the five exemplary junior high school teachers. It seemed that the teachers liked the people who surrounded them and the people liked the exemplary teachers. Because teaching is such a people-orientated job, successful relationships are

crucial. Therefore, successful relationships with students, parents, and the local community were perceived as definitely significant to being an exemplary junior high school teacher.

The final component of interpersonal knowledge is that of working cooperatively with colleagues. This was significant to the respondents because they all felt, as did Browning, that "no man is an island." In order for them to teach effectively and continue to improve, they need the help of the people they work with. The importance of teamwork was stressed by the five exemplary junior high school teachers quite often. Relationships with colleagues are very important because the combination of support, help, resources, and teamwork all contribute to exemplary teaching.

Thus interpersonal knowledge is a significant part of exemplary teaching because teaching is such a relationship-based and people centered profession, and if one does not have the refined people skills, he or she will not survive, let alone be exemplary.

Intrapersonal knowledge. The final type of knowledge found in the triad of knowledge is intrapersonal knowledge. Intrapersonal knowledge was divided into four parts: (1) has disposition towards continuous learning and constant renewal; (2) possesses refined use of reflection; (3) possesses the ethic of care; and (4) possesses the development of work ethic.

Continuous learning was valued among the five exemplary junior high school teachers. They felt that constant improvement would not occur without continuous learning. So a disposition toward continuous learning is very significant to exemplary teaching because it is necessary for constant improvement and renewal.

Conventional wisdom suggests that reflection is very significant to exemplary teaching. The five exemplary junior high school teachers in this study said they are continuously inspecting and reflecting on just about everything they do. Reflection was the tool the teachers in this study used often to evaluate if what they are doing in the classroom is the best for the students.

Possessing an ethic of care was deemed by the five exemplary junior high school teachers as the most significant part of their being. Without the ethic of care, the teachers in the study felt that one could not teach at all. They all agreed that caring was the most important part of teaching. Wes said that when his care for the students was gone he would be gone.

Possessing the development of a work ethic was the fourth aspect of intrapersonal knowledge. "Nothing comes without work" seemed to be the overall consensus of the five exemplary junior high school teachers. This is significant to exemplary junior high school teaching because without hard work, it is impossible to make a difference in the students' lives. The teachers invested long hours and spent a great amount of time providing

for the students, preparing their lessons, learning, and reflection. A work ethic is significant to being an exemplary teacher because if one does invest time for the students he or she will not make a positive difference in their lives.

Intrapersonal knowledge was deemed as the most important in the triad of knowledge by the five exemplary junior high school teachers. The teachers felt that an ethic of care is by far the most significant quality any teacher should have. Reflection is also very significant because without it a teacher can not improve. And without continual learning and constant renewal a teacher could not improve as well. All of the above take time and work, therefore a work ethic is definitely needed. Thus, intrapersonal knowledge is very significant to exemplary junior high school teaching because it is the foundation of all the other aspects of the exemplary teacher and the triad of knowledge.

The fourth sub-question addressed by the five exemplary junior high school teachers was: **How do exemplary junior high school teachers perceive the importance of the three components of the triad of knowledge?**

The triad of knowledge ranked. The five exemplary teachers were asked which of the three factors of the triad of knowledge was the most and which was the least important. All of the teachers concurred that

intrapersonal knowledge was by far the most important because without an ethic of care, constant reflection, constant renewal, and a work ethic, the other two aspects of the triad of knowledge would not exist.

Professional knowledge was deemed as the least important because knowing one's subject matter and curriculum is not as important as possessing an ethic of care. The five exemplary junior high school teachers also felt that with the proper work ethic, a disposition towards continual learning, and reflection, anyone can learn subject matter. So having intrapersonal knowledge will help one acquire professional knowledge.

Interpersonal knowledge was ranked between the two others. All of the teachers felt that interpersonal knowledge was very important, but not as important as intrapersonal knowledge. They also felt that with strong intrapersonal knowledge comes strong interpersonal knowledge. Strong people and teamwork skills usually come from an immense amount of continual learning and reflection.

Thus it is significant to note that, although all three aspects of the triad of knowledge are important to being an exemplary junior high school teacher, the five exemplary junior high school teachers ranked them from greatest to least important starting with intrapersonal knowledge, then interpersonal knowledge, followed by professional knowledge.

The triad of knowledge was deemed as necessary but not sufficient for exemplary junior high school teaching. Therefore, the fifth and final

sub-question addressed by the five exemplary junior high school teachers was: **What do exemplary junior high school teachers possess which are beyond Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge?**

Character Qualities

The individual characteristics which are incorporated in this theme include care, exuberance, reflection, self-knowledge, humor, humility, and pride. Care and reflection were previously addressed in the triad of knowledge.

Exuberance. The qualities of being positive, full of energy, enthusiastic, and challenge orientated were common among the five exemplary junior high school teachers. These qualities are important because the teacher's energy and enthusiasm transfer directly to the students, and therefore learning is enhanced. Also because these teachers thrived on challenges and did not give up, the possibilities for learning in the classroom and continuous improvement were endless.

Self-knowledge. All of the exemplary junior high school teachers in this study definitely had a "strong sense of self" who knew who they were and what they stood for. Self confidence and acceptance of themselves were something all of the teachers stressed were important when teaching junior

high school. They felt that junior high school students can smell insecurity and weakness, so if you have any, they will rip you apart. Therefore, a strong sense of self is a significant quality of an exemplary junior high school teacher.

Humor. According to the five exemplary junior high school teachers, a sense of humor was vital to exemplary junior high school teaching. The respondents felt that if a they were not able to laugh at themselves as well as recognize the humor in the students, they could not teach effectively.

Humility. A personality trait that I found common in the five exemplary junior high school teacher was that they were able to laugh at themselves and admit that they were fallible. The five teachers interviewed were able to admit their imperfections and stressed that they are just human beings like everyone else. Because the exemplary junior high school teachers did not exhibit intimidating arrogance towards their students, colleagues, and educational community, they were much more approachable and personable.

Pride. The five exemplary junior high school teachers were all teaching junior high school because they loved it. They all exhumed a sense of pride because they all knew that being able to teach and enjoy teaching

junior high school students is regarded by many as amazing. The teachers in this study knew that what they do everyday many other people would not have the stomach for. Being exemplary junior high school teachers was a source of pride for the five exemplary junior high school teachers and they thrived on it.

Philosophy

This theme referred to the teaching philosophy of the exemplary junior high school teacher. The categories which make up this theme are perseverance, comfort, mutual treatment, student-centered teaching, student growth, continuous learning, successful relationships, inspirational learning, and holistic teaching. Student centered learning, student growth, successful relationships, inspirational learning, and continuous learning were previously addressed in the triad of knowledge.

Perseverance. It is important for the teachers to be able to endure, forgive, and then move on. Adolescents are highly emotional human beings who "work from their gut for the most part", therefore many of them do not realize some of the things they say or do. As Wes stated, one has to "be prepared to take everything they can dish out, handle it in the best way you can and then move on. And whatever you do, don't dwell on it."

This was a common and significant theme because the teachers all realized that they have to understand that junior high school students are somewhat fragile and confused, so if they take it out on you as a teacher, you cannot take it personally and hold a grudge against that student. A teacher cannot give up on a student for any reason and they must be prepared to forgive and move on.

Comfort. The teachers in this study felt that a safe, secure, and happy learning environment was important to their teaching. The teachers strove to make their classrooms a safe haven for the students. This theme is significant because the teachers knew that in order for the students to learn effectively, they must first feel safe and secure.

Mutual treatment and respect. This was a very important and significant theme found in the five interviews. The teachers believed that mutual respect and trust were very important in the classroom. The teachers felt that because the students modeled their behaviors so much, the only way to receive certain behaviors was to give them. Therefore, the golden rule of "do onto others as you would want them to do onto you" was stressed in all of their classrooms.

Holistic teaching. Their presence of "whole being is a teacher" was prominent. The five exemplary junior high school teachers did not separate their personal being from their teaching, they were all one. This was significant because it illustrates that these teachers are exemplary because teaching junior high school students was what they were not what they did.

Insightiousness

"Insightiousness" was a prominent characteristic among the five exemplary junior high school teachers. The term "insightiousness" was coined because no word existed that meant: a legitimate understanding and appreciation for someone. It is more than having insight into someone's being, but actually really understanding what makes someone "tick." Being "insightious" means that the teachers are able to fully understand and appreciate their students. As well, as addressed in the theme "Junior High School Student," the respondents were also very knowledgeable about the many facets of junior high school students. Therefore, the exemplary junior high school students had a great amount of insight into the junior high school students which they taught.

Understand and appreciate. This was a very common theme among the five exemplary junior high school teachers. Even though to like, be interested, and understand junior high school students may seem like

obvious requirements for someone teaching junior high school, it is still important to note.

This theme is highly significant. Because of the complexity of the adolescent, a teacher must be aware and understand the clients he or she is educating. Not only that, but he or she must enjoy working with junior high school students if one is to be successful with them. Therefore, it is important to the exemplary teaching status that the teacher likes, is interested, and understands junior high school students.

Adultolescence

A significant theme which emerged from the data was that the five exemplary junior high school teachers paralleled the junior high school students they taught. A term did not exist to define this, therefore the word "adultolescence" was created. "Adultolescence" means an adult who has many 'adolescent like" qualities. The teachers I interviewed admitted that in their youth they were all very challenging junior high school students themselves. Further probing revealed that the five exemplary junior high school teachers shared similar characteristics to that of their students. Examples include: they liked being surrounded by people; their peers were very important; their constant need for recognition; they were rebellious and liked to be on the edge; and they were emotional and sensitive.

Therefore, exemplary junior high school teachers are essentially overgrown junior high school students.

Personae

Another theme which emerged was related to the exemplary junior high school teacher's personae. A person's personae, or the essence of who a person is, affects the type of teacher he or she is. The five exemplary junior high school teachers definitely had a unique presence about them. As a researcher I could feel it when I entered the room. The teachers' voices were very comfortable and reassuring. Their body language revealed that they were restless. Their facial expressions were very warm and inviting. This is a significant theme because even though personae is difficult to explain it has great bearing on the way one comes across to others. It also has great bearing on the presence of the exemplary junior high school teacher.

Summary

The findings related to the five sub-questions described in this chapter have provided a comprehensive description of an exemplary junior high school teacher. Recommendations for practice and implications for theory and subsequent research follow.

Recommendations for Practice

Even though the results from this study are not generalizable, they are transferable. Recommendations for individuals and learning institutions interested in applying the current findings to practice emerged from the overview of the study.

There are significant implications from these findings for junior high school teachers, administrators, and for those who train junior high school teachers. The areas that the findings of this study can contribute to are as follows:

1. Encourage junior high school teachers to improve their teaching practice. There is always room for improvement in one's teaching, no matter how strong a teacher may be. All of the exemplary junior high school teachers in this study admitted that they still have a great amount to learn and they will never be finished learning. The findings from this study have the potential to help teachers identify their strengths and weaknesses, and if they choose, they can improve on their weaknesses.

2. Help "teachers in difficulty" diagnose their own weaknesses. Some teachers are unable to teach junior high school students effectively and they are unclear why. The findings from this study can give them some basis to work from. The troubled teacher can take it upon himself or herself to improve his or her teaching. Or the teacher may decide that he or she lacks

an important quality like "Insightiousness" which is just too difficult to "learn." The overall benefit is that the junior high school teachers can take it upon themselves to decide if they have what it takes to continue as a junior high school teacher.

3. Administrators are often given the task of helping "teachers in difficulty." The findings from this research can help those administrators diagnose the problems the junior high school teacher is having and try to help the teacher correct his or her weaknesses.

4. Administrators hiring candidates for junior high school positions. Administrators can use the findings from this study as a criteria for qualities to look for when hiring their staff. Most candidates will obviously not be exemplary before they have had experience in a junior high school, but by using the findings from this study, an administrator can still delve into the candidate's "being" to see if he or she has the potential to be an exemplary junior high school teacher.

5. Teaching colleges or universities for educating junior high school teachers. The findings could help educators concentrate on other areas which are important for junior high school teachers instead of so much on professional knowledge. Also, if student teachers are shown the findings of an exemplary junior high school teacher, they can decide ahead of time if they have what it takes to be effective in a junior high school classroom.

6. The findings may have important implications for the teachers and administrators of "middle schools." Junior high schools include grades seven to nine, so there is an overlap of the middle school grades which include grades five to eight.

Recommendations for Theory and Implications for Future Research

Recommendations for future research on exemplary junior high school teachers from the findings of this study are presented below.

1. Continue qualitative research on exemplary junior high school teaching because there is limited research on this topic in the educational data bases. Continued research on exemplary junior high school teachers would be an asset to junior high schools, and especially the students who attend them.

2. Partially, the findings in the study supported Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge which came from the literature. Figure 1 is a result of expanding the conceptual framework developed from the literature to incorporate the findings of the study. In a description of the framework and the components: Level 1, professional skills; Level 2, a) personae, b) character qualities, and c) philosophy; Level 3, a) adultolescence, and b) insightiousness, as shown in Figure 1 are discussed below.

EXEMPLARY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHING MODEL

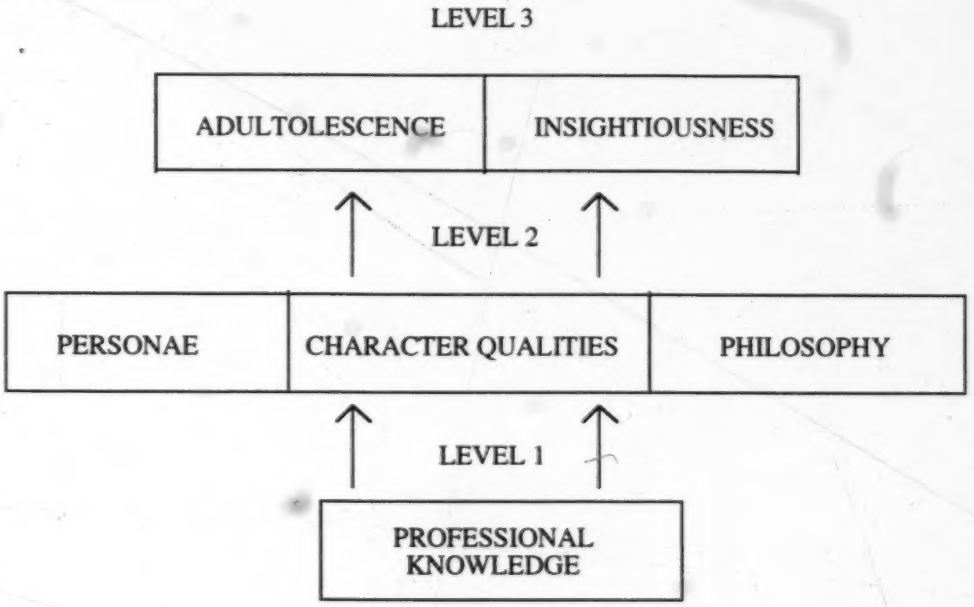

Figure 1. Conceptual framework for exemplary junior high school teaching from the findings.

Level 1 - Primary Exemplary Junior High School Teaching Component.

This is the most basic component of the Exemplary Junior High School Teaching Model. It is the least important component of this model but it still a necessary one.

Professional knowledge. This comes directly from Collinson's (1996) triad of knowledge. This component includes knowledge of curriculum and subject matter as well as classroom management techniques. The aspect that I took out of Collinson's (1996) professional knowledge, which I believe fits better in Level 2, is inspirational teaching.

Level 2 - Secondary Exemplary Junior High School Teaching Components

This is the second level and is more significant to exemplary junior high school teaching than Level 1. This level includes the junior high school teacher's personae, character qualities, and philosophy.

Personae. This component of Level 2 is basically the essence of the junior high school teacher. The personae theme includes personal characteristics like body language, facial expressions, voices, their whole being as a teacher, and their overall presence.

Character Qualities. This component includes the actual character qualities of the junior high school teacher which makes him or her

exemplary. Findings from the research which make up this category include: care, exuberance, humility, pride, reflection, humor, and self-knowledge.

Philosophy. This component refers to the teaching philosophy of the exemplary junior high school teacher. The findings which make up the teacher's philosophy are as follows: perseverance, comfort, student-centered teaching, mutual treatment, student growth, continuous learning, successful relationships, and inspirational teaching.

Level 3 - Tertiary Exemplary Junior High School Components

This is the highest level and is the most specific to being an exemplary junior high school teacher. Level 3 refers to those components which allow exemplary junior high school teachers to relate so well with their students. The two components which make up this level are "Adultolescence and "Insightiousness."

Adultolescence. "Adultolescence" is an adult with adolescent qualities. "Adultolescence" refers to how much junior high school teachers actually parallel or are similar to the junior high school students they teach. The findings suggests that exemplary junior high school teachers, like their students are people-centered, need peer acceptance, need recognition, are often rebellious, are often emotional, are easily challenged, are unique, and exhibit similar thought processes.

Insightiousness. "Insightiousness" refers to the ability for the junior high school teacher to "put himself in the junior high school students' shoes." The findings which make up this component are to understand them, to appreciate them, and to be knowledgeable about junior high school students.

3. Another recommendation for future research applies to the exemplary junior high school teaching model. Further research should go into the personae and "Adultolescence" components of the model. These components are very important to the field of exemplary junior high school teaching yet there is a limited amount of literature addressing them.

Personal Reflections

The following is an analysis of the findings presented in this thesis from a personal perspective. These views are an integration of personal beliefs and opinions formulated from a review of relevant literature, past experiences, as well as reflections on the findings of this study.

Teaching junior high school has been a passion of mine for some time now. I realized this the day I left my junior high school teaching job to return back to university to pursue the masters degree for which I write this thesis. Throughout my years of teaching I often received sympathy from friends, family, and even strangers for having to "put up with junior high school students everyday." I was often confused by this sympathy

because I thought (and still do) junior high school students are exciting and challenging to teach.

The confusion, however, did make me think. The people who offered me sympathy, as well as myself, were all junior high school age once, so many of us still remember the way we acted as hyperactive adolescents. Throughout my years of teaching, and before that being a junior high school student, I have been associated with some amazing junior high school teachers and some who were "not so good." "Obviously", I thought, "there must be a difference between the 'amazing' and the 'not so good' teachers." Therefore, what I set out to do, and the purpose of this study, was to find out: What makes a junior high school teacher exemplary?

I am not declaring that the results from this study will identify all the attributes one needs to be an exemplary junior high school teacher. There are exemplary junior high school teachers who may not have some of the qualities that I have found. As well, there may be other qualities that were not prevalent or I failed to identify.

I do believe however, that there are some commonalties among exemplary junior high school teachers and that, if one chooses to, could adopt to make oneself more effective in the junior high school classroom.

Another personal reflection pertains to the realization of the inability of the findings of this study to transfer to the elementary or high school

level. Although the findings from this study may also be found in exemplary teachers of other teaching levels, they will not be found in the same degree. For example, a high school teacher may need more professional knowledge and much less "adultolescence" than a junior high school teacher. An elementary teacher may need more intrapersonal knowledge and much less "Insightiousness" than a junior high school teacher. Therefore, this study is much more relevant to exemplary junior high school teachers than to exemplary teachers from elementary or high school.

Reflecting upon the five interviews of the teachers who participated in this study, I feel that I have been afforded many personal benefits and insight. First I have reaffirmed many of my own personal feelings of why I love being in a junior high school classroom. Second, as a current junior high school teacher, I have been enlightened by copious amounts of valuable information which has definitely made me a stronger teacher. Third, I have been inspired to be the best junior high school teacher I can be. And fourth, I believe this study will make a much better administrator with respect to helping and hiring teachers.

The first benefit was reaffirming many of my own personal feelings of why I love teaching junior high school. It was refreshing to hear teachers saying that junior high school is the best place to be, not the worst, like so many people kept informing me. After teaching junior high school

for a few years I began to take for granted the many great things about teaching junior high school and the junior high school students themselves. It also helped me reaffirm that my philosophy in the classroom and how I treat my students are "on par" with the five exemplary junior high school teachers I interviewed.

The second benefit was that I learned a lot from these teachers and realized that there is always room for improvement and I will never "know it all." This study was humbling for me in a way because I not only reaffirmed what I know, but I realized how far I have to go. But already I can see the changes in my classroom by putting into place some of the information I learned from the five exemplary junior high school teachers.

The third benefit was that this study really sparked me and rekindled my desire to be the best teacher I can be. The energy which exhumed from the five exemplary junior high school teachers inspired me to work harder in the classroom and strive for excellence.

Another benefit, for this future administrator, is that I will be much more able to help out struggling teachers who are having problems in the classroom. From this study I have revealed many facets which make a teacher strong, so I will have a much better idea diagnosing a problem if I know what to look for. Also, when hiring a teacher, I can look for certain characteristics or the potential characteristics that I believe will make this person a strong candidate to be teacher in my school.

Reflections on method. The five exemplary junior high school teachers were chosen by administrators, so it could be argued that students would be a much better resource for selecting the teachers. I realize this limitation to my study. I can only conclude that the administrators of the school listen to the students, so the students would have had indirect input into the selection.

I also realize that with more teachers I would probably have discovered more attributes of exemplary junior high school teachers. But do to the limitations of time and resources, I feel confident that I have revealed some very important data that will contribute to this particular field.

Despite the limitations and my concerns, I believe that my study does make a contribution. Although the findings from my study are limited by my skills as a researcher, I take comfort knowing that others may arrive at new levels of understanding. In addition, I am hopeful that this research will encourage someone else to delve further into the topic of exemplary junior high school teaching. There are many junior high school students who will surely benefit if they do.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Questions

1. In what ways do you believe junior high school students are different from elementary or senior high students? (essential)

2. What areas do you believe an exemplary junior high school teacher should be strong in? (essential)

3. What does the phrase "exemplary junior high school teacher" mean to you? (probing)

4. Do you see yourself as exemplary? Why do you think this? (probing)

5. What do you think is your most significant quality as an exemplary junior high school teacher? (essential)

6. What is your philosophy in the classroom? (probing)

7. What suggestions would you give a teacher who wants to be exemplary? (essential)

8. Which of the following areas: knowledge of subject, classroom management skills and curriculum; people skills; or ethics of care and reflection, is the most important to you as an exemplary junior high school teacher? Which is the least important? (essential)

APPENDIX B

LETTER INVITING NOMINATIONS FOR STUDY

My name is Aaron Trimble and I am currently on educational leave. I am studying Educational Administration and Leadership at the University of Alberta pursuing my Master of Education Degree.

The past five years I have been a junior high school teacher. Throughout my years, I have discovered junior high school students are quite unique. In my review of literature, Tara Fenwick (1996) gave, what I believe, is an accurate description of a junior high school student. She stated that "junior high school students are adolescents experiencing confusing physical changes and growth spurts, inner tensions between needs for autonomy and needs for dependence, anxiety about appearance, experiments with humor and personality roles, identity confusion, intense and transient wide-ranging emotional experiences, and new demands for responsibility and interpersonal skills." Therefore, I have also realized the challenges inherent in teaching junior high school students.

The afore mentioned junior high school students are the inspiration of my study. Due to their complexity, teaching junior high school students is very challenging, yet some exemplary junior high school teachers teach these students with amazing success. The purpose of this study is to identify what makes him or her an exemplary junior high school teacher. The goal

of this study is to contribute the findings, which emerge from the data, to junior high school teachers which will then further enhance the education of junior high school students.

In order to conduct my study, I must first find the exemplary junior high school teachers. At the end of this nomination form are three blanks provided. Please nominate the teacher(s) you believe is an exemplary junior high school teacher. A criteria of qualities of an exemplary teacher has been provided to help guide you in your selection. You are not limited to nominating teachers from your present school, but may include the name or names of individuals teaching at the junior high school level in Edmonton. For each individual nominated, please indicate the school he or she is teaching.

The following criteria may assist you in nominating the exemplary junior high school teacher. Blanks have been provided if you feel the criteria is lacking and, as well, you may cross out any of the entries you feel are inappropriate.

The following are characteristics provided by literature of exemplary teachers. The characteristics have been divided into three main categories; professional knowledge, interpersonal knowledge, and intrapersonal knowledge.

Professional knowledge

-possesses in-depth knowledge of subject matter and curriculum

-possesses strong classroom management techniques

-inspires learning, manages energy, and stimulates interest while teaching subject matter

-uses strategies at assisting students to learning with understanding and gets students involved in classroom discussions and activities

- _____

- _____

Interpersonal knowledge (people skills)

-fosters students intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth

-has successful relationships with students and local community

-attends to individual students' needs

-involves parents in student learning

-works cooperatively with colleagues

-is involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

-_____

- _____

Intrapersonal knowledge

-has a disposition towards continuous learning

-possesses the increasingly refined use of reflection

-possesses the development of an ethic of care

-possesses the development of work ethic

-is concerned with constant renewal

- _____

- _____

It is important that you complete the following nomination independently without consulting your colleagues. Once your nomination is complete, please return it to me in a sealed envelope.

From the nominations of all the schools, volunteers will be solicited until five exemplary junior high school teachers are identified as participants.

Thank-you for your assistance. I hope that through a combination of interviews and narrative exchanges with teachers nominated by their principal as being exemplary, an increased understanding of teaching junior high school students will emerge.

Aaron Trimble

****

NOMINATIONS OF EXEMPLARY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Name

School

1._____. _____

2._____. _____

3._____. _____

After you have completed the nomination form can you please call me to come pick it up at Ph. 437-1571 or mail it to me at the following address:

Aaron Trimble
10844-84th Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta
T6E 2J2

Could you please sign your name and your school below simply to help me locate the teachers you have nominated. The teachers nominated will **not** be told who nominated them so your name will remain totally **confidential**. This nomination form will also **never** be shown to the teachers you selected. Thank-you for your time and contribution to this important study, and if you have any questions, please feel free to give me a call.

_____

_____

Principal's Name School

Yours truly,

Aaron Douglas Trimble

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION

A Study of Exemplary Junior High Teachers

I acknowledge that this research project has been explained to me and that any pertinent questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that Aaron Trimble will answer any additional questions that I have about the research project.

I understand that participation in the study is completely voluntary and that I will receive no remuneration for the time spent working on this project outside of my normal work hours. I understand that the study will involve interviews and narrative exchanges. Should I decide to participate, and later decide to withdraw from the study, I may do so at any time without penalty.

I understand that I will receive a copy of this signed consent form. I also understand that the report of this study will be a public document, but I have been assured that my confidentiality will be respected.

_____ _____

Name of Participant (Please Print) Signature of Participant

Aaron Trimble (PH # 437-1571) _____

Name of Researcher Signature of Researcher

_____

Date